Socialist Animalism: Essays, Interviews, and Fiction

By Jon Hochschartner

Socialists and the animal question

The socialist left remains particularly inhospitable for those concerned with animal domestication. This hostility goes back a long way. As Dr. Steve Best points out, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels "lumped animal welfarists, vegetarians, and anti-vivisectionists into the same petite-bourgeoisie category comprised of charity organizers, temperance fanatics, and naive reformists." Leon Trotsky railed against those opposed to revolutionary violence, scornfully describing their ideology as "vegetarian-Quaker prattle."

Things aren't that different today. Paul D'Amato, a writer for whom I otherwise have a good deal of respect, took on the animal question in a Socialist Worker column which reads as little more than uninformed trolling.

"Does a mountain lion that kills a deer have a right to a trial by a jury of its peers?" He asks ridiculously. "Should cows have freedom of assembly, speech and religion?"

He acknowledges he is speaking with tongue in cheek, but insists "there is a point to it." D'Amato goes on to recount Adolph Hitler's animal protection efforts, because, you know, animalists are actually closet Nazis.

Things are hardly any different on the anarchist side of the aisle. For instance, log onto the LibCom.org forums, which are maintained by London-based libertarian communists, and ask, as I have, the otherwise nice folks what they think of animalists. And you'll see the British didn't get their reputation for beef-eating for nothing.

In a preface to an edition of Animal Farm, George Orwell explained the central metaphor of his satirical novel, writing, "Men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat." Modern animalists, such as Barbara Noske and David Nibert, have expanded on this unifying theme, injecting Marxist thought into the emerging field of critical animal studies. But there has been no similar effort on the part of anti-capitalists.

In fact, the attitude toward animalism among the socialist left is arguably more reactionary than that of the general population. My low-wage coworkers might think my views regarding non-humans are privileged and eccentric, but they never display the vitriolic scorn my beliefs earn among the socialist left.

My theory is that large segments of the socialist left, which at the moment are disproportionately made up of white-collar workers, has adopted a misguided workerism, by which I mean a perspective that glorifies a crude caricature of blue-collar culture, in an attempt to bond with those on lowest tiers of the capitalist system. To these more privileged members of the working class, casual indifference to animal exploitation is a defining trait of blue-collar workers. That this is immensely condescending should go without saying. But it's also not based on a socialist understanding of class. For socialists, economic groups are not defined by eating habits, culture, or even income. They're defined by someone's relationship to the means of production.

My class-struggle resume isn't anything to write home about. But it's not something I'm embarrassed about either. I've written for a variety of leftist publications, from Socialist Worker to Z Magazine. I was active in the Occupy movement, for which I spent a couple days in jail. I filed charges against my employer, and won a settlement, for their union-busting. I feel I've made some humble contributions. But I'm also an animalist. And I'm sick of feeling I'll be treated like the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield--no respect!--if I don't hide this in socialist circles.

Despard was anti-speciesist socialist

The British activist Charlotte Despard, in addition to being a communist, feminist and Irish nationalist, was an animalist of some degree, practicing prefigurative vegetarianism and campaigning against vivisection. Despard was on friendly terms

with Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of Karl Marx, and was a delegate to the Second International meeting in 1896, prior to the organization's dissolution during the First World War. Following stints in other socialist groups, she would eventually join the British Communist Party, for which her house was attacked by a right-wing mob.

Despard was, according to Rod Preece, president of the London Vegetarian Society and the National Canine Defence League. She was present at the 1906 unveiling of a controversial anti-vivisectionist statue, according to Coral Lansbury, which sparked riots when trade unionists and feminists defended the monument from attack by medical students. The statue featured a bronze dog atop a fountain, which was inscribed with the following words.

"In Memory of the Brown Terrier Dog done to Death in the Laboratories of University College in February 1903, after having endured Vivisection extending over more than two months and having been handed from one Vivisector to another till Death came to his Release," the inscription stated. "Also in Memory of the 232 dogs vivisected at the same place during the year 1902. Men and Women of England, how long shall these things be?"

In 1910, conservatives gained control of the local government and sought to have the statue removed. Despite protests by Despard and other anti-vivisectionists, the monument was dismantled in the middle of the night by government workers guarded by an astonishing 120 police officers, according to Lansbury.

Despard connected her feminism to her animal advocacy. "The Women's Movement is related also with the other great movements of the world," she said. "The awakened instinct which feels the call of the subhuman which says — 'I am the voice of the voiceless. Through me the dumb shall speak,' is a modern phenomenon that cannot be denied. It works itself out as food reform on the one hand, and on the other, in strong protest against the cruel methods of experimental research. Both these are in close unison with the demands being made by women."

As I've mentioned in other articles, Stalinist Russia was hostile to vegetarianism. In 1930, Despard toured the Soviet Union in what one must assume was a trip carefully choreographed and managed by her hosts. According to Adam Hochschild, "She found everything to be splendid: the diet was good, children

privileged, education enlightened, orphanages first-rate, and the courts wise and generous." Despite her support for Stalinism and the British Communist Party, which was under the sway of the Soviet Union, one can't necessarily assume Despard had given up her commitment to prefigurative vegetarianism in later life. According to James D. Hunt, she was Vice-President of the London Vegetarian Society in 1931.

Despard died in 1939 at the age of 95. According to the Communist Party of Ireland

website, she had been declared bankrupt two years prior, "her finances exhausted from her philanthropic and political activities."

Marx's son-in-law hated animals

Paul Lafargue, son-in-law to Karl Marx and a revolutionary in his own right, supported vivisection in the socialist newspaper L'Egalité in late 1881. Lafargue, who would die in a suicide pact with Marx's daughter, defended the exploitative practice in a manner that revealed his deep speciesism and scathing disdain for animalists.

"When it comes to beasts the bourgeois have the tenderness of angels," Lafargue wrote sneeringly. "Everywhere there are societies for the protection of dogs, cats, sparrows, etc." The subset of animalists that most disturbed him apparently were those opposed to animal testing. "Of all these societies the most bothersome, the most hypocritical, the most nauseating is the anti-vivisection society," Lafargue wrote. Interestingly, however, Lafargue had many of the same criticisms of anti-speciesist organizations that modern animalists do. "All of these societies are speculations," he wrote. "A certain number of influential members (presidents, secretaries, agents, inspectors, etc) are lavishly maintained on the funds intended for beasts."

Lafargue continued on, taking anti-vivisectionists to task for their supposed pretentiousness. "Pigeon shooting, where thousands of tamed pigeons are wounded and mutilated for the amusement of a few imbecilic aristocrats, is highly approved of by the anti-vivisection society," Lafargue wrote. "Several of its most influential members are big pigeon shooters." Whether these accusations are true I'm unsure. But either way, such gotcha anti-veganism, by which I mean criticism of failures or inconsistencies in animalists' personal practice, is inherently ad hominem. It's used to ignore the merits of non-human advocates' policy proposals.

Lafargue bemoaned what seems to be public oversight of animal testing, strangely suggesting that this government regulation was capitalist inspired. "The society of anti-vivisectionist animals of England has pulled so many strings that it has obtained from parliament a law prohibiting physiological experiments on living animals without permission from the police," Lafargue wrote, disbelieving. "This is how the bourgeois treat their illustrious men. They degrade them to the point of putting them under the control of the cops even in the laboratory."

Much of Lafargue's argument rested on a dubious dichotomy between political work on behalf of animals and political work on behalf of the human working class. Animalists, "feel themselves to be closer relatives of beasts than of workers," which, according to Lafargue, was a reflection of their supposedly uniformal ruling-class station. And yet if this were true, why so often was capitalist exploitation justified by comparing the human proletariat to domesticated animals? Challenging speciesism undermines a common ideological rationale for class domination.

Paraphrasing an English factory inspector, Lafargue wrote that "there exist two kinds of experiments: one practiced by physiologists on a few animals, the other practiced on thousands of men by speculators." As an example of the latter, Lafargue wrote that "two years ago a manufacturer of rice powder in London, Mr. King, falsified his merchandise with clay and arsenical dust." Human infants who were exposed to the powder died of poisoning. Lafargue seemed to suggest that animalists, who were opposed to vivisection, were not outraged by this. My guess is Lafargue was attacking a straw man here. But even if he wasn't, his accusation that animalists' sympathies were reductionist could easily be flipped to apply to him. Where perhaps anti-vivisectionists were blind to class injustice, he was blind to species injustice. After all, the "few animals" he blithely described as vivisected in the name of anthropocentric science likely had a higher level of consciousness than the human infants poisoned by rice powder.

Ultimately, if indifference to animal exploitation is inherent to socialism as conceived by the likes of Lafargue, it's not a socialism I want to have anything to do with. Animalism and the class struggle are linked, if only because capitalists employ speciesism to justify their exploitation of the human masses.

Towards a Marxist animalism

To develop a Marxist animalism, we must situate non-humans within the labor theory of value, building on the intellectual groundwork laid by anti-speciesists like Barbara Noske and Bob Torres. The socialist animalist George Bernard Shaw reportedly argued, "I don't need a theory of value to tell me the poor are exploited." I'm sympathetic to such anti-intellectualism. But the truth is that for animalists to effect the species politics of Marxists, who have a disproportionate ideological influence on the far left, we must learn to speak their language. While I am very far from an expert on the minutiae of communist theory, this is what I have attempted to begin doing here.

Domesticated animals, like slaves, are distinct from proletarians in that they do not sell their labor power under the pretense of free choice. Rather, they themselves are commodities. Their labor power is sold all at once, unlike proletarians' whose labor power is sold in increments. "The slave did not sell his labour-power to the slave-owner, any more than the ox sells his labour to the farmer," Karl Marx said. "The slave, together with his labour-power, was sold to his owner once for all. He is a commodity that can pass from the hand of one owner to that of another. He himself is a commodity, but his labour-power is not his commodity."

Within Marxism, necessary labor is that work needed to reproduce the exploited's labor power. In the human context, it's the work slaves or proletarians perform to create the equivalent of their livelihood. All work over and above this is surplus labor, unremunerated toiling which creates profits for the slave master or capitalist. Domesticated animals also perform necessary and surplus labor for their

owners. When an animal exploiter purchases a non-human, he is not only purchasing the animal herself, but a lifetime of her labor power, which is used to create commodities that include — among others — her offspring, her secretions, and her own flesh. Her necessary labor would be that required to create the equivalent of her food and shelter. Her surplus labor would be all that beyond this, which is used to enrich her owner.

Within Marxism, there are two different methods with which slave masters or capitalists can increase the surplus value their laborers produce. Absolute surplus value is obtained by increasing the overall amount of time laborers work in a particular period. For instance, a slavemaster or capitalist might increase the length of the working day or allow fewer days off a year. Meanwhile, relative surplus value is created by the lowering the amount of work dedicated to necessary labor in proportion to that dedicated to surplus labor. For instance, a slave master or capitalist might reduce what constitutes their laborers' livelihood or increase their laborers' productivity.

Domesticated animals' surplus labor can also be divided into the generation of absolute and relative surplus value. For instance, when a carriage horse's working day is increased from six to nine hours, absolute surplus value is produced for the animal exploiter. In contrast, relative surplus value is created when chickens' productivity is increased through genetic manipulation and the introduction of growth drugs. Similarly, relative surplus value is produced by lowering the cost of chickens' livelihood through intensive confinement.

Of course, what constitutes liberation for slaves or proletarians is different than what constitutes liberation for domesticated animals. Whereas the ultimate economic goal for human laborers is social control of the means of production, domesticated animals, were they able, would presumably not want to seize, say, a factory farm and run it for themselves. They would want to be removed from the production process entirely.

I hope there are no theoretical errors here, besides the intentional subversion of classical Marxism's anthropocentrism. But again, the intricacies of theory are not my strongest suit. I have no doubt others can radically expand, and where necessary, correct, this brief outline of a potential Marxist-animalist analysis

ISO member Brit Schulte discusses animal issues

Brit Schulte is a member of the International Socialist Organization and Feminist Uprising to Resist Inequality and Exploitation, in addition to being an editor of Red Wedge magazine. Among other things, according to her biographical statement on the website of the Marxist art and culture publication, “she helped to coordinate the regional and statewide Walk For Choice marches in Texas, and was also an on-the-ground organizer in Atlanta during the fight to save Troy Davis with the Campaign

to End the Death Penalty." Schulte recently agreed to an interview in which she discussed her species politics.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else?

Brit Schulte: I consider myself a lot of things, but I most often identify as a Marxist Feminist and Revolutionary Socialist. I believe that a world without exploitation and oppression is possible, where sustainable resources meet human and nonhuman animal need, and people organize themselves by free association.

JH: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left? How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left?

BS: I am currently a member of the International Socialist Organization and FURIE (Feminist Uprising to Resist Inequality and Exploitation). I have to say it entirely depends on who I'm talking with. I've met leftists of all stripes who have equally varied responses to the fight for animal emancipation or the "vegan question." I do however find more folks sympathetic to the cause in the anarchist community. There seems to be an understood connection, communicated via the cultural expressions of the anarchist scene, between anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-speciesist struggles. That's not to say that my socialist and communist identifying comrades aren't making these connections, but culturally and programmatically speaking I do not see these connections being made expressly.

On the other hand, I have also encountered hostility and crude humor from comrades and allies alike specifically around issues that they perceive as mere lifestyle choices: vegetarianism, veganism, etc.

JH: Does your organization have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

BS: There is no official position on animal exploitation per say, but the analysis and commitment to ecosocialism does include a condemnation of "Big Agra" and a firm position against the worldwide environmental degradation that this capitalist system has brought about — which the vast consumption and exploitation of animals for profit is undeniably linked.

I would prefer if a clearer stance was taken, and that anti-speciesism be included in more direct ways. That's only going to happen by winning people to this position within the organization. It's going to take free and open discussion and debate about how to include this struggle alongside other struggles for a better world. It's going to take better analysis and further theoretical exploration- and practical application.

There are many of us within the organization that believe in this work, and are prepared to do the patient (even frustratingly patient) task of making the case for animal emancipation to be on the agenda.

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

BC: I feel like recommending Upton Sinclair's The Jungle here…

Animal exploitation is absolutely connected to worker exploitation. The conditions that workers are forced to operate under in factory farms are unfit and unsustainable. The serious health risks and hazards that these workers face isn't limited to just the encounters with the tormented and brutalized animals. We must consider the industrial accidents — the equipment that dis-limbs, the pesticides, the fecal matter and refuse that workers wade in, the list goes on and can be more gruesome. We should also mention that these jobs, by in large, are worked by folks of color. These workers are often migrant workers, and endure endless abuse because of their citizen status.

Agricultural workers have systematically had their unions busted into nonexistence, and suffer disproportionately from illnesses that are linked to the chemical exposure, and PTSD that results from working in these disgusting and violent conditions. Then there is the genetically modified and hormone riddled foods that these workers have to feed their families because of its low cost. The poor have always eaten the worst, and today's low wage workers are no exception. Foods are regularly bleached, or cut with filler products. The cheapest food is the worst for us, most low cost meat has growth hormone pumped into it to accelerate development so younger, thinner cattle/swine/poultry/fish can be produced, butchered and sold faster. So if the job itself doesn't kill you, the food that results from it will.

"Big Agra" is not concerned with worker's well-being or eco-sustainability; they are solely concerned with profit growth and expansion. This constant drive for profit results in the inhuman, miserable conditions that the animals and workers face. The workers are not trained to use humane methods to butcher; they are trained to produce meat and carcass at break-neck speeds. Most byproducts are dumped (resulting in some of our world's largest margins of pollution), or can be found in questionable other "mixed meat products" at bargain grocery outlets. It wasn't too long ago that folks were up in arms about Aldi mixing in horse meat with its beef products. This is a typical practice to cut corners, and cut costs.

It's undeniable that these jobs, which focus specifically on the torture and butchering of other living sentient beings, affect the worker's psyche. This stress, and brutal work take a toll both mentally and physically. No animal, human or otherwise, should have to live, work, and die in those conditions.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an

individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

BS: I think that anyone who is involved and active in the fight for a better world should have a critical systemic analysis. One person's decision to become a vegan or vegetarian is not going to overthrow the environmental-killer capitalism. However coordinated efforts, boycott campaigns, and other collective initiatives are strategic actions that can make an impact. While an individual choice is just that, individual, a creative collective response can help activate those who might not make the same choice on their own. It takes time for folks to unlearn social norms- like eating meat. That's understandable. Someone who eats meat can still organize to resist capitalism, however I do think it's time we begin to shift the debate around animal emancipation to include more strategy and tactics to get people excited about cutting meat out of their diets and making a statement in the process.

Obviously there is no "going off the grid" under capitalism. So we clothe ourselves, feed ourselves, and transport ourselves however we can and no one who speaks out against any injustice should be shamed for doing so because of what they're eating, wearing, or for their mode of transit. While these actions may seem hypocritical, we don't know where everyone is coming from, so entering into a dialogue instead of a confrontation is always best when talking political perspectives. Someone who is newly radicalizing may be unaware of the latest offense committed by a clothing retailer, etc. Folks should be welcomed on board activist projects and patient conversation and debate should be had when issues arise.

(Unless of course it violates BDS, then we gotta call that shit out.)

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

BS: My short answer is no.

Considering the Big Agra, factory farm meat industry, shrimping/whaling/fishing (read as the disastrously fated oceans) company lobbyists — these major corporations are American institutions. They paint themselves as family businesses, committed to providing "quality products" at affordable prices. Most of them are even linked to green-washing campaigns! All the while they contribute to the proud meat eating identity that so many americans assume.

(Just look at all the goddamn bacon merchandise out there. Or better yet, mention anywhere in public that you're a vegan or vegetarian and listen to EVERYONE else explain why they are unable to live without cheese or bacon. Or Bacon cheese burgers. This just recently happened to me in my workplace — again.)

Their marketing and sales strategies contribute to the social conditioning which

gives rise to meat consumption, while their lobbying firms line the pockets of governmental "representatives" to ensure the Big Agra and meat agenda is positively pushed and protected. That hamburger might be cheap, but its unsustainable and tortuous origins have poor, working people, and animals paying with our lives.

Capitalism needs the oppression and subjugation of the natural world to propagate itself. It's as simple as that.

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact super exploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

BS: I have to side with Torres on this one, although I find a lot of scholarship from this debate lacking. Animals are not part of the proletariat; they are not capable of self-activity toward revolutionary ends — you'll notice I use the phrase animal emancipation elsewhere in this interview. They are in bondage, and their natural habitats are being destroyed. We need to begin a process of liberating animals from the unsustainable, for-profit conditions that they live and die under.

JH: British socialist Richard Seymour has said the relationship between animals and humans in Marxism is under theorized. Do you agree? If so, what areas are particularly lacking?

BS: Absolutely. I think we need to better address the question of "living commodities." There is a real urgency in linking revolutionary theory to practical application across the spectrum of struggles.

JH: Are there additional thoughts or comments you would like to make?

BS: To those on the left who will (undoubtedly) be defensive about their meat consumption: this is not about your personal eating habits. It is however about reframing the debate. As a broad anti-capitalist movement, we should be demanding the right to sustainable and nutritious foods. We should be demanding an end to genetically modified, or hormone injected foods. All food should be safe to consume, and not negatively impact the environment. Everyone should have access to the very best that our natural world has to offer, provided it does not compromise ecosystems. We should champion a world where all sentient beings live healthy lives, and thrive. Mental and physical activity, everything we are able to do as human animals, all depends on the kind of nourishment we get. It is far past time to address these struggles.

Why is it so goddamn contentious to say that our eating habits need not be cruel?

Communard Louise Michel was an animalist

Since I'm interested in both socialism and animalism, historical figures who managed to reconcile the two ideologies fascinate and inspire me. That's why I find the French communard Louise Michel so interesting.

During the Paris Commune of 1871, she served the working-class uprising as an ambulance worker and militia member. When the rebellion was overrun, Michel was captured and tried. She dared the court to execute her, but ultimately was imprisoned in France for almost two years before being deported.

In her memoirs, Michel wrote that she traced her progressive politics to animalist feeling. "As far back as I can remember, the origin of my revolt against the powerful was my horror at the tortures inflicted on animals," she said. "I used to wish animals could get revenge, that the dog could bite the man who was mercilessly beating him, that the horse bleeding under the whip could throw off the man tormenting him."

She wrote that from an early age she rescued animals and that habit continued into adulthood. "I was accused of allowing my concern for animals to outweigh the problems of humans at the Perronnnet barricade at Neuilly during the Commune, when I ran to help a cat in peril," she said. "The unfortunate beast was crouched in a corner that was being scoured by shells, and it was crying out."

Michel believed there was a link between the subjugation of animals and the subjugation of humans. "The more ferocious a man is toward animals," she wrote, "the more that man cringes before the people who dominate him." In fact, she credited her opposition to the death penalty to witnessing the slaughter of an animal as a child.

She raged against vivisection, writing, "All this useless suffering perpetrated in the name of science must end. It is as barren as the blood of the little children whose throats were cut by Gilles de Retz and other madmen."

According to the International Vegetarian Union website, one Louise Michel attended the 1890 International Vegetarian Congress in England. The report of the meeting states she "expressed her views on Vegetarianism. The eating of flesh meant misery to the animals, and she held that it was impossible for men to be happy while animals were miserable."

And yet, search her memoirs for the term 'vegetarian' and you will find nothing. As a very young child, Michel was traumatized by the sight of a decapitated goose. "One result was that the sight of meat thereafter nauseated me until I was eight or ten," she wrote, "and I needed a strong will and my grandmother's arguments to overcome that nausea." This of course suggests she consumed flesh and her memoirs do not immediately mention a later-in-life change in practice.

She also wrote, "Instead of the putrefied flesh which we are accustomed to eating, perhaps science will give us chemical mixtures containing more iron and nutrients than the blood and meat we now absorb." This could be interpreted as anticipating the in-vitro meat now being developed. But it could also be read as a reflection of her belief that animal-derived foods were nutritionally necessary or superior in her era.

While it seems clear where her sympathies were, I'm unsure if Michel was a vegetarian. But ultimately I don't think individual consumer choices matter a great deal.

Was Elizabeth Gurley Flynn an animalist?

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, a leader in the Industrial Workers of the World and later Communist Party USA, practiced prefigurative vegetarianism for at least a portion of her life. The texts I've been able to access suggest her choice was to some degree influenced by animalist concern.

The inspiration for folksinger Joe Hill's song "Rebel Girl," Flynn was a feminist and founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union, in addition to her roles as a socialist and labor leader. Her activism took her from New York City, where she spent her formative years, to Russia, where she died.

Her dietary change was inspired by Upton Sinclair's book "The Jungle," which she apparently read as a teenager. "After reading it I forthwith became a vegetarian!" Flynn stated in her memoir. "He wrote this book in 1906 to expose the terrible conditions of the stockyard workers and advocate socialism as a remedy. But the public seized rather upon the horrible descriptions of filth, diseased cattle, floor sweepings and putrid meat packed in sausages and canned food."

Sinclair was himself a vegetarian, but apparently for health reasons, rather than any sort of concern for animals. "It has always seemed to me that human beings have a right to eat meat, if meat is necessary for their best development, either physical or mental," Sinclair wrote later. "I have never had any sympathy with that 'humanitarianism' which tells us it is our duty to regard pigs and chickens as our brothers."

This does not seem to have been the case for Flynn. Writing of her visit to the Chicago stockyards in 1907, she said she "couldn't stand to see the animals killed. The frightened squeals were dreadful. I remained vegetarian. It smelled bad, looked bad, and left a bad taste for days afterward."

Despite her sympathy, it was clear she believed animalist concerns should be prioritized below the class struggle. Writing of the Lawrence textile strike of 1912, she said, "The workers of Lowell, a nearby textile town, led a cow garlanded with leaves, to the strikers of Lawrence. I felt sorry for her with her festive appearance

and mild eyes. But she had to be slaughtered to feed hungry children. Her head was mounted and hung up in the Franco-Belgian Hall."

How long she remained vegetarian is unclear. Flynn wrote her memoir at the age of 65 and the tone with which she describes the vegetarianism of her youth sounds patronizing. At the risk of overanalyzing, for instance, the exclamation mark used after declaring her past vegetarianism — "I forthwith became a vegetarian!" — reads to me as if she now thinks her earlier position was absurd or scarcely to be believed at the time of writing.

Her later involvement with Communist Party USA, which was closely tied to the Soviet Union, and of which she eventually became chairwoman, also suggests she might have given up prefigurative vegetarianism. To what degree, if any, this is the product of Red-Scare hysteria I'm not sure, but a variety of sources state that vegetarianism was banned in the Soviet Union.

According to the website of the International Vegetarian Union, for instance, "The revolution of 1917 stopped the development of vegetarianism in Russia. The Soviet State authorities considered vegetarianism as a pseudoscientific theory that reflected the bourgeois ideology and therefore harmed to Soviet people. In 1929 the last vegetarian society in Moscow was closed...The leaders of the vegetarian societies were persecuted, many of them arrested and sentenced." According to the Moscow Times, at one point the Big Soviet Encyclopedia ridiculously stated, "vegetarianism, which is based on false hypotheses and ideas, does not have followers in the Soviet Union."

ISO might form animalist tendency

Alan Peck, a member of the International Socialist Organization, the largest group on the American revolutionary left, hopes to launch an animalist tendency within the organization. He believes capitalism and animal exploitation are connected and suspects a significant minority of the ISO would be interested in joining the tendency.

Peck was first introduced to the ISO in late 2011. "I met the local branch of the ISO during the first general membership meeting of my union after I was hired, right as Occupy Wall Street broke out," he said. "I'd already followed left-of-Obama politics for a number of years, so when a guy made a proposal to endorse Occupy San Diego and form an Occupy solidarity group within our union, I made a point to strike up a conversation with him."

As it happened, the person Peck spoke with was a revolutionary and together they joined the Occupy San Diego Labor Solidarity Committee. There he found that "many of the activists making the clearest, best arguments and being the most effective leaders were all from this strange socialist group," Peck said, referring to the ISO.

His political transformation occurred quickly. While the Occupy San Diego General Assembly fizzled, the Labor Solidarity Committee to which he belonged flourished. "Within a handful of months, I transformed from a disaffected former Democrat who thought a repeal of Citizens United would solve everything, into a full-on Marxist," Peck said.

He believes the ISO needs an organized tendency for those with progressive species politics to agitate for animalist positions within the group. "The combination of laws, customs, and economic incentives that support animal agriculture closely resembles other systems of oppression within capitalism, often eerily so," Peck said. "Just as we believe that racism, sexism, and queerphobia will not end without the overthrow of capitalism, and capitalism cannot be overthrown without challenging these oppressions inside the system, I think that what we do to animals is interrelated with the exploitative system of capitalism in the same way."

Still, Peck seems to concede that widespread veganism is not necessary to overthrow private ownership of the means of production.

"Materially, there is nothing keeping the working class from organizing to overthrow the rulers while still eating animals," he said. "However, the ideologies that support the infliction of unnecessary suffering on non-human animals in the interest of profit are the same ideologies that must be confronted and undone in the process of ending capitalism and building a better world."

Additionally, Peck said, the worst animal abuse occurs on factory farms, the same spaces where the most severe exploitation of human workers and degradation of the environment also take place. "Given these facts, I think it is right for revolutionaries, and. revolutionary organizations, to challenge the system of animal exploitation," he said.

Peck is hopeful that a sizable portion of the ISO membership would join an animalist tendency. "In the branch, about a fifth are vegan or vegetarian," Peck said, adding he believed that percentage would join the tendency. "I don't know the landscape in other branches. I suspect the numbers are similar in other urban branches."

Still, Peck might have his work cut out for him in forming a tendency, as the organization's rules don't explicitly condemn or condone their formation. While there has been a lively discussion of the need for caucuses and factions within the group, he said, there has been little talk of tendencies. "We see caucuses as organizations of members who are part of a specially oppressed group, and we see factions as temporary formations to agitate for a political position," Peck said. "Most members see factions as probably necessary at times but inherently hostile. A tendency on the other hand would not be hostile to the main politics and practice of the organization, but nonetheless advocate a minority position."

'Dehumanization' made possible by low-status of animals

Throughout history, when one human group exploits or oppresses another, the dominant group invariably justifies its actions by likening the subordinate group to animals. This isn't a coincidence.

By successfully linking subordinate groups to animals in the popular imagination, dominant groups are able to justify their position by tapping into society's widespread speciesism, which views the exploitation or oppression of animals as legitimate. In this way, the fight against speciesism and those against racism, sexism, and classism, among others, are connected. Let's look at a few examples of how dominant groups link subordinate groups to animals.

In "The Eternal Jew," a racist, 1940 Nazi propaganda film, Jewish people were explicitly compared to rats, a species upon which humans place particularly little value. "Where rats appear, they bring ruin by destroying mankind's goods and foodstuffs," the narrator intoned. "In this way, they spread disease, plague, leprosy, typhoid fever, cholera, dysentery, and so on. They are cunning, cowardly and cruel and are found mostly in large packs. Among the animals, they represent the rudiment of an insidious, underground destruction - just like the Jews among human beings."

In 2013, a white 911 operator in Texas compared African Americans to animals on social media. "Call after call are black people fighting and screaming and hitting each other and they want to yell at me and treat me like shit," the operator wrote. "Black people are outrageous! They are more like animals."

The writer Samuel Johnson, who died in 1784, reportedly compared women's participation in public life to animals unnaturally mimicking human behavior. "A woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs," Johnson said. "It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

Arguing in favor of forcing women to carry pregnancies to term after 20 weeks, in 2012 a Georgia state representative implicitly compared women to livestock. "I've had the experience of delivering calves, dead and alive – delivering pigs, dead and alive." The male lawmaker said. "It breaks our hearts to see those animals not make it."

In "The Principles of Scientific Management," an influential 1911 monograph by Frederick Winslow Taylor in which the techniques of modern capitalist exploitation are outlined, Taylor repeatedly compares human workers to domesticated animals. "Now one of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than any other type," Taylor wrote. "The man who is mentally alert and intelligent is for this very reason entirely unsuited to what would, for him, be the grinding monotony of work of this character."

More recently, for instance, in 2012, Terry Gou, the chairman of Hon Hai, parent company of the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer Foxconn, compared his workforce to animals and suggested he could learn management

techniques from the director of the Taipei Zoo. "Hon Hai has a workforce of over one million worldwide and as human beings are also animals, to manage one million animals gives me a headache," Gou said.

The struggles for human liberation and animal liberation are linked, if only because dominant human groups employ speciesism to justify the exploitation or oppression of subordinate human groups that society deems "animal-like." By bettering the conditions of animals, we better the conditions of humans.

Take the subject of class. Progressives are well aware that raising the wage of the lowest-paid workers will boost the income of higher-paid workers as expectations for 'fair' compensation rise. Conversely, progressives know that lowering the wage of the lowest-paid workers will drag down the income of higher-paid workers as expectations for 'fair' compensation fall.

The same relation can be seen when one looks at the treatment of animals and the treatment of humans. As expectations rise for what constitutes 'fair' treatment for animals, the supposed lowest of the low, expectations for what constitutes 'fair' treatment for humans will also rise. In contrast, the 'dehumanization' of human groups is made possible by the low status of animals. The sooner the anthropocentric left recognizes this, the better.

The tragicomic history of the OWS Animal Issues group

Lately, I've become interested in the possibilities of animalists forming sub-groups within broader left-wing organizations and movements. Today, I will recount the story of brave souls attempting to do just this and failing in spectacularly-hilarious fashion. Without further ado, I present the tragicomic history of the Occupy Wall Street Animal Issues working group.

The group met only nine times, according to the New York City General Assembly. One would be stretching the definition of the word to describe some of these attempted gatherings, for which the minutes were faithfully documented, as "meetings."

The group first met on February 1, 2012, well after Occupy Wall Street was evicted from Zuccotti Park and the movement was on its way to irrelevance. Eight people attended this inaugural meeting, which started half an hour late. A heated debate quickly broke out regarding the costs and benefits of a horizontal- organizational model, as the group argued whether to make everyone an administrator of what one must assume is their mailing list.

"Johanna responds that she wants to feel free to e-mail information and that how the group is choking with bureaucracy and she doesn't experience this with any other group and things are more flowing and freer," the minutes state. "Ruth disagrees and expresses concern about changing this policy so that everyone could be an administrator. "

But the dispute doesn't end there. "Dan agrees with Johanna and expresses that the spirit of OWS is not to have hierarchies, and that everyone should be an administrator," the minutes state. "Adam replies that is not a question of hierarchies but of making sure things are organized and safely reliable."

This leads one member to threaten to quit. As the minutes say, "Johanna replies that if she is not going to have the freedom to get things done, then she is going to have (to) leave the group." After being interrupted by a passerby asking for potato chips, the meeting was closed.

The group's third gathering, on February 15, did not go well either. The only one in attendance, Adam was listed as the meeting's facilitator and note taker. "Adam walked around 60 Wall Street looking for people looking for the meeting. He found no one," the minutes state. "Adam left."

Turnout for future gatherings was better, but not by much. The fifth meeting, for instance, boasted only three attendees. If the minutes available are complete, months passed between the fifth meeting and the sixth. Listed in attendance at the sixth gathering was a "LOUD coffee grinder," which one guesses made talking difficult. There was no facilitator for the meeting, as presumably the tiny group had given up the pretensions it was necessary.

While the results were sadly humorous, those in the OWS Animal Issues should be applauded for attempting to inject anti-speciesist politics into broader leftist movements. Let's hope that future attempts will be more fruitful. There is evidence that formations of the anthropocentric left can be pushed in progressive directions by what are assumably minority, animalist voices within them. Socialist Party USA, for instance, calls for the ban of the fur trade and animal testing for product development. Though these are obviously piece-meal proposals, if put into practice they would benefit millions of animals every year.

Green Party Candidate Howie Hawkins discusses animal treatment

Howie Hawkins is the Green Party candidate for governor of New York State. Additionally, he is a member of Socialist Party USA and Solidarity. His running mate, Brian Jones, is a member of the International Socialist Organization.
Hawkins agreed to an interview with me in which he discussed animal exploitation.

Jon Hochschartner: Why should those concerned by the treatment of animals vote

for you?

Howie Hawkins: Because my campaign is building a movement and party to replace the capitalist system that generates the mistreatment of animals, from puppy mills and factory farms to the mass extinction now underway due to habitat destruction and global warming. Capitalism's inherent drive for endless growth based on competitive accumulation relentlessly destroys animal habitat and mistreats domestic and farm animals in the blind, amoral pursuit of profit.

We want to replace the economic dictatorship of capitalism with an economic democracy that many call socialism or the cooperative commonwealth. In a democratic economy, people will have the power to choose to meet their material needs on an ecologically sustainable basis that protects habitat and treats animals ethically. We support cooperatives in the private sector, democratic public utilities for those goods and services that ought to be available to all as human rights, and democratic planning of technology choices and public investment and spending.

JH: Does the Green Party have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

HH: The platform of the Green Party of the United States has a section opposing animal exploitation.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the fights for economic justice and better treatment for animals intertwined?

HH: The same domineering institutions, ideologies, and sensibilities that rationalize the domination of human by human also rationalize the domination of nature, including non-human animals. In order to harmonize society with nature, we must harmonize human with human. The fight against the mistreatment of animals, like the fights against racism, sexism, and exploitation, are part of the fight for a humane ecological society.

When we fight for the economic human rights to decent jobs, living wages, publicly-funded health care, a good education, affordable housing and public transit, and clean energy and a sustainable environment, we are fighting for a society in which the well-being of each is dependent on the well-being of all of its sentient creatures, human and non-human alike.

Does socialist critique of terrorism apply to animalists?

The animalist movement has long been divided between militants and pacifists, between those who support violence against property or institutional exploiters and those who do not. In one camp, we find activists like Steven Best, who argue the

scope of animal exploitation is so great that preventative violence is a moral necessity. In the other, we find activists like Gary Francione, who argue all forms of violence are wrong, including those directed at institutional exploiters or their property.

I'd argue that by focusing so intently on the morality of violence, the animalist movement often ignores whether the debated tactics are effective. Additionally, I'd like to investigate what, if anything, we can learn from other movements that have grappled with the question of terrorism. In this essay, I will be examining the revolutionary workers' struggle specifically.

Most socialists don't have a moral opposition to violence, but recognize it's generally incapable of creating large-scale, permanent change when carried out by individuals or small groups. By the 1890s, according to Randall Law, even anarchists were distancing themselves from the doctrine of 'propaganda by the deed,' with luminaries such as Peter Kropotkin declaring a "structure based on centuries of history cannot be destroyed with a few kilos of explosives."

In a 1911 article, "Why Marxists Oppose Individual Terrorism," Leon Trotsky, whatever one's interpretation of the Bolshevik Revolution might be, neatly summarized the socialist case against political violence carried out by individuals. First, it's important to understand how Trotsky defined terrorism for the sake of his article. Terrorism was not limited to "the killing of an employer... (or) an assassination attempt, with revolver in hand, against a government minister." Terrorism included "the damaging of machines by workers, for example."

For Trotsky, the human masses were the fundamental agents of progressive change. Practitioners of terrorism falsely believed they could become these agents themselves and skip past the process of winning the masses to their position. "In our eyes," Trotsky writes, "individual terror is inadmissible precisely because it belittles the role of the masses in their own consciousness, reconciles them to their powerlessness, and turns their eyes and hopes towards a great avenger and liberator who some day will come and accomplish his mission."

Obviously, the points about agency Trotsky raises here don't apply to the animalist movement. Unlike the human masses, who must collectively liberate themselves, animals cannot do so. They must rely on the human masses for their freedom. Some contemporary socialists, such as Paul D'Amato, have argued this fact justifies denying animals rights. But such a position ignores that many human groups, such as infants or the severely-mentally disabled, cannot fight for their interests either and must rely on the human masses to do so for them.

Still, if Trotsky is right, and terrorism discourages collective action by the human masses, when that is what's required for real change for animals, one must conclude terrorism is a dead-end. On the other hand, one could also argue that collective action by the human masses on behalf of animals is so unlikely in the present era

that individual terrorism is the best for which we can hope.

In his article, however, Trotsky goes on to highlight how little terrorism achieves, besides increased police repression. "The smoke from the confusion clears away, the panic disappears, the successor of the murdered minister makes his appearance, life again settles into the old rut, the wheel of capitalist exploitation turns as before; only the police repression grows more savage and brazen," Trotsky writes. "And as a result, in place of the kindled hopes and artificially aroused excitement comes disillusionment and apathy."

Trotsky's point regarding increased police repression is undeniable in the context of the animalist movement to anyone who has read the work of writers such as Will Potter on the Green Scare. Further, as Trotsky says, the wheel of systemic exploitation is generally unaffected by terrorism. Slaughterhouses and laboratories are generally rebuilt. While the non-human lives saved by terrorism should not be ignored, animalists frequently seem to mistake the use of terrorism as the symptom of a robust movement, when in fact it's the opposite. Resorting to such desperate actions represents an inability to garner the mass support needed to create real change.

Anti-speciesists should move beyond abstract debate regarding the morality of political violence to a concrete discussion of its effectiveness. To do this, we needn't reinvent the wheel. Let's learn what we can from other movements that have grappled with the issue of terrorism. Some of the lessons won't be applicable, but many will.

Elisee Reclus was an anarchist animalist

Elisee Reclus, the French anarchist and geographer, was a prosletyzing animalist who practiced prefigurative vegetarianism. Serving as a militia member, he was an active participant in the Paris Commune of 1871, a working-class uprising that Karl Marx dubbed "the glorious harbinger of a new society." After his capture by government forces, Reclus was initially to be deported to New Caledonia, an archipelago off the coast of Australia. But due to the intervention of his supporters, which according to some sources included Charles Darwin, Reclus' sentence was reduced to banishment, which allowed him to live in Switzerland.

Reclus was sensitive to violence against animals as a young child. "One of the family had sent me, plate in hand, to the village butcher, with the injunction to bring back some gory fragment or other," Reclus wrote, recalling an example. "I still remember this gloomy yard where terrifying men went to and fro with great knives, which they wiped on blood-besprinkled smocks. Hanging from a porch an enormous carcass seemed to me to occupy an extraordinary amount of space; from its white flesh a reddish liquid was trickling into the gutters." Overwhelmed by the sight of the slaughterhouse, Reclus apparently fainted.

Reclus wrote perceptively about the process which allows humans to commit such violence, a process we might call speciesist socialization. A child's horrified reactions to the exploitation of animals "wear off in time; they yield before the baneful influence of daily education," Reclus stated. "Parents, teachers, official or friendly, doctors, not to speak of the powerful individual whom we call 'everybody,' all work together to harden the character of the child with respect to this 'four-footed food,' which nevertheless, loves as we do, (and) feels as we do."

Perhaps anticipating the work of writers such as Joan Dunayer, Reclus recognized the role language plays in denying or rationalizing animal exploitation. "The animals sacrificed to man's appetite have been systematically and methodically made hideous, shapeless, and debased in intelligence and moral worth," Reclus wrote. "The name even of the animal into which the boar has been transformed is used as the grossest of insults; the mass of flesh we see wallowing in noisome pools is so loathsome to look at that we agree to avoid all similarity of name between the beast and the dishes we make out of it."

And of course Reclus believed there was a connection between violence against animals and violence against humans. "Is there then so much difference between the dead body of a bullock and that of a man?" Reclus asked. "The dissevered limbs, the entrails mingling one with the other, are very much alike: the slaughter of the first makes easy the murder of the second, especially when a leader's order rings out, or from afar comes the word of the crowned master, 'Be pitiless.'"

Reclus died in 1905 at the age of 75. "It is reported that his last days were made particularly happy by news of the popular revolution in Russia," according to Camille Martin and John P. Clark. "He expired shortly after hearing of the revolt of the sailors on the battleship Potemkin."

Draft horse exploitation in Adirondack-logging industry

Writing history from the perspective of domesticated animals, the group most exploited under capitalism, is incredibly difficult to accomplish. I recently attempted this, researching the exploitation of draft horses in the Adirondack lumber industry in the 19th and early-20th centuries. Unsurprisingly, given society's speciesism, the labor of these animals is almost completely invisible. Reading through the various popular histories of the region, mentions of the horses' forced toil, essential to past logging efforts, are rare.

From a Marxist-animalist perspective, there were differences between the animal and human laborers working in lumber production. The human laborers were proletarians, in that they sold their labor power to logging companies incrementally, under the pretense of free choice.

"A good lumberjack with a sharp ax could cut seventy logs a day for a month," Paul Schneider said. "For this the lumberjack received, at midcentury [1850], about

seventy-five cents a day." Though room and board was provided, Schneider said, "pay was often in company script that was good only at selected local stores and bars, or at the camp commissary."

The draft horses were closer to slaves, in that their labor power was sold all at once, without any semblance of agency. "Most of the horses were Belgians, often obtained from farms in Ontario for $80 to $110 each," according to Bill Gove. "In the years after World War I, the price was over $300." Due to domesticated animals' obvious lack of political power, even in comparison to human proletarians, these horses produced surplus value at a much higher rate than the lumberjacks working beside them.

Logging was a massive business in the Adirondacks. In the early 1870s, according to Schneider, "upwards of a million logs a year were floating down out of the mountains." As Frank Graham, Jr. pointed out, wood was always in demand for fuel in houses and factories. In addition, it was constantly needed to construct buildings, furniture, ships, and countless other important products. However, Craig Gilborn said, the profits from the industry did not remain in the Adirondacks, but rather enriched the capitalists "whose businesses and homes were chiefly in Glens Falls and cities outside the region."

Logging generally took place in the late fall and early winter, according to Schneider. "This was in part because timber left lying through the summer attracted woodworms, and even more because most loggers preferred to spend the warmer months farming or guiding," Scheider said. "Smaller crews were employed through the summer and early fall building logging roads and constructing camps where the seasonal men would stay."

Draft horses were made to haul logs. According to Gove, the best animals, from the perspective of their human masters, could interpret the commands of teamsters and were able to quickly pick up on potential dangers. "A well-trained skid horse could even work alone without an escort, twitching a log from the cutting crew down to the man at the skidway and returning without anyone walking along with him," Gove said. "If the log hung up en route on an obstruction such as a rock, the horse knew enough to 'gee and haw' in different directions on his own until the log came free."

Working in the winter posed specific challenges. "If a horse fell in deep snow, it became quite difficult for him to get back on his feet with the harness in place," according to Gove. "He would lie still, as trained, until the teamster unhooked the straps and chains. Most horses would readily walk across a railroad trestle, carefully stepping on the ties."

This involuntary labor, dragging logs, often ended in death for the non-humans involved. "The mortality rate for the horses was high," according to Lloyd Blankman. "Sometimes fewer than half of them survived when the drive started in the spring.

All kinds of accidents befell them. There were sickness, trees falling, unseen holes and cliffs, icy roads, many occasions for trouble." Besides being dangerous, the work was gruelingly difficult. "Working eleven hours a day during the season, a horse could be expected to last about six years," according to Gove. Due to his troubling vagueness, one is unsure whether Gove meant the horses died from exhaustion after this period, were slaughtered, or sold for another form of work.

Could a meat-eater advocate for a vegan society?

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about the emphasis animalists place on the assumed need to practice personal veganism so as to advocate public veganism. In its most basic form, the question that has been rolling around my head boils down to whether it should be acceptable for a meat-eater to advocate for animal liberation, a phrase I use to mean, as Ronnie Lee does, "an end to all persecution, exploitation and killing of other animals by human beings or for us to reach a situation that is as near to that as possible."

While this issue has been rattling around my head for some time, a few readings and experiences have recently brought it to the fore.

One of these thought-provoking readings was Norm Phelps' book "Changing the Game," particularly those sections which dealt with the distinctions between movements that focus on private morality and those that focus on public policy. He listed regressive campaigns such as prohibition, the war on drugs and the anti-abortion movement as belonging to the former, while highlighting progressive campaigns like the civil-rights movement, second-wave feminism and the LGBT struggle as belonging to the latter.

"The public generally sees animal rights as belonging to the private tradition," Phelps wrote, after pointing out the population of vegetarians and vegans in the United States has not grown or shrank over at least the past dozen years, fitting with the pattern he established of movements associated with the private tradition failing. "They believe this in large part because we place so much emphasis on personal dietary decisions and comparatively little emphasis on institutional and societal attitudes toward animals."

Another of these readings was an interesting article called "Animal Liberation and Marxism," in a recent issue of the Weekly Worker, a publication of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In a section of the article, members and supporters of Assoziation Dämmerung, an animalist group informed by the Frankfurt School, were asked about the importance they place on the prefigurative nature of personal veganism.

While all defended the prioritizing of personal veganism, for the most part they did so less strongly and for different reasons one might expect. None of them, for instance, did so because they believed a product boycott was a feasible way to end

or limit animal exploitation, so far as I could tell. Susann Witt-Stahl summarized what seemed to be the majority's defense of personal veganism as primarily necessary for unbiased thinking.

"If you accept our ideas yet continue to eat meat, it is also true that you remain trapped in a process of self-alienation," Witt-Stahl said. "You cannot eat animals if you truly perceive them as tormentable bodies. If you eat animals, you will inevitably have a different relationship to them: they are just things, objects to you - not beings that strive for happiness or at least want to avoid suffering."

Finally, one of the experiences that brought the question of the importance of personal veganism to prominence in my mind was attending a 2013 lecture by Rod Coronado at Skidmore College. For those not aware, Coronado is something of a legend in the animalist and environmental communities for sinking Icelandic 'whaling' ships and releasing mink from research farms, among other things. I had heard a few years back he had given up veganism, but thought perhaps he had adopted it once again, as he was launching a speaking tour that was heavily promoted in the animalist community and included stops at the 2014 Animal Liberation Forum. This wasn't the case. I asked during the question-and- answer section whether he was vegan and he said he wasn't.

While I briefly toyed with the possibility of centering this essay around Coronado, I quickly realized he was not an adequate test case for whether practicing personal veganism was necessary for advocating public veganism because I was doubtful he saw animal liberation, using the definition supplied by Ronnie Lee, as an end goal. My understanding was that he approved of pre-industrial methods of exploitation of animals by humans.

Ultimately, I'm still very confused about how I feel about the issue. For instance, what would the historical equivalent be, in another movement, to a meat-eater advocating animal liberation? Would it be an 19th-century abolitionist who used slave-produced goods? My brief research suggests the majority of abolitionists did not seriously engage in boycotting. Or would it be closer to an abolitionist who owned slaves?

Moving to the worker's movement, with which I am more familiar, would the equivalent be a socialist who used goods produced in sweatshops? Well, as a socialist I can say that most comrades I've come across tend to view such boycotts as hopelessly naive and do not engage in them. Or would the closer equivalent be a socialist who owned a large business? Frederick Engels owned a mill, though he spent a good deal of his fortune bankrolling revolutionaries such as his intellectual collaborator Karl Marx. Perhaps there is no useful comparison.

A negative side effect of animalists' emphasis on the assumed need to practice personal veganism so as to advocate public veganism that I've noticed is that it opens us up to and, in fact, invites what I'll call "gotcha anti-veganism." Gotcha anti-

veganism involves criticizing failures or inconsistencies in someone's personal practice so as to ignore their public proposals for animals. For instance, an exaggerated example of this might include someone saying, "Oh, you didn't know Cheerios have vitamin D3 in them, which comes from lanolin, which comes from sheep's wool? Well, you're complicit in the exploitation of animals and therefore have no right to complain about slaughterhouses."

One might assume that gotcha anti-veganism is employed solely by domestication apologists. But animalists reinforce this self-defeating standard all of the time. Gary Francione, for instance, frequently points out that there is little difference between the violence involved in the most egregious, prosecutable cases of animal abuse and everyday treatment of farmed animals. This comparison is a useful tool that I've borrowed. But the way in which it is frequently presented suggests that non-vegans have no right to criticize any form of violence against animals. On a practical level this has a silencing effect on potential allies who are critical of non-human abuse, which is ultimately detrimental to the animalist cause.

Vegan Angela Davis connects human and animal liberation

While Angela Davis is well known for her progressive perspectives on race, gender, and class, less well known are her views on species, which are quite forward thinking. The great socialist scholar, it might surprise some to hear, does not consume animal products.

"I usually don’t mention that I’m vegan but that has evolved," Davis said at the 27th Empowering Women of Color Conference, according to a transcript available at RadioProject.org. "I think it’s the right moment to talk about it because it is part of a revolutionary perspective - how can we not only discover more compassionate relations with human beings but how can we develop compassionate relations with the other creatures with whom we share this planet and that would mean challenging the whole capitalist industrial form of food production."

Challenging this form of food production, Davis said, would involve witnessing animal exploitation firsthand. "It would mean being aware - driving up the interstates or driving down the 5, driving down to LA, seeing all the cows on the ranches," she stated. "Most of people don’t think about the fact they’re eating animals. When they’re eating a steak or eating chicken, most people don’t think about the tremendous suffering that those animals endure simply to become food products to be consumed by human beings."

For Davis, this blindness is connected to the commodity form. "I think the lack of critical engagement with the food that we eat demonstrates the extent to which the commodity form has become the primary way in which we perceive the world," she said. "We don’t go further than what Marx called the exchange value of the actual object- we don’t think about the relations that that object embodies- and were important to

the production of that object, whether it's our food or our clothes or our iPads or all the materials we use to acquire an education at an institution like this. That would really be revolutionary to develop a habit of imagining the human relations and non-human relations behind all of the objects that constitute our environment."

Davis struck a similar note in a video recording uploaded to the Vegans of Color blog.

"I don't talk about this a lot but I'm going to do this today because I think it's really important," she said. "The food we eat masks so much cruelty. The fact that we can sit down and eat a piece of chicken without thinking about the horrendous conditions under which chickens are industrially bred in this country is a sign of the dangers of capitalism, how capitalism has colonized our minds. The fact that we look no further than the commodity itself, the fact that we refuse to understand the relationships that underly the commodities that we use on a daily basis. And so food is like that."

Davis suggested viewers watch the film 'Food, Inc.' "And then ask yourself," she said, "what is it like to sit down and eat that food that is generated only for the purposes of profit and creates so much suffering?" Davis concluded her comments by explicitly linking the treatment of humans and animals.

"I think there is a connection between, and I can't go further than this, the way we treat animals and the way we treat people who are at the bottom of the hierarchy," She said. "Look at the ways in which people who commit such violence on other human beings have often learned how to enjoy that by enacting violence on animals. So there are a lot of ways we can talk about this."

Assoziation Dämmerung discusses animal issues

Assoziation Dämmerung is a Marxist-animalist group based in Germany that was profiled in a Weekly Worker article earlier this year. They recently agreed to an email interview with me, in which they answered questions collectively.

Jon Hochschartner: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with the broader socialist or anarchist left?

Assoziation Dämmerung: Assoziation Dämmerung (the name refers to an aphorism called Dämmerung written by the critical theorist Max Horkheimer, its English title is "Dawn") is the product of a recent transformative change of the first and oldest left-wing animal rights and later animal liberation group in Germany called Tierrechts-Aktion Nord (TAN). TAN was founded at the end of the 1980s in the city of Hamburg in northern Germany and has undergone some changes on the political as well as theoretical level. Some years ago we transformed the group from an

animal liberation single issue group to an eco-socialist or eco-Marxist one that bases its political work on the theoretical insights of Marx, Engels, and other so called traditional communists like Rosa Luxemburg, as well as the critical theory of the Frankfurt School whose best known members were Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse.

We still work on a bunch of animal liberation topics. Last year e.g. we organized a national meeting for the left-wing animal rights and animal liberation movement in Germany to discuss a self-critique of our movement e.g. regarding single issue politics, lifestyle politics, consumerism and so on, and to debate a Marxist approach to animal liberation. We aimed to analyze the industrial capital organizing the German meat industry (which is, by the way, the most powerful in the European Union) or to reflect upon the task to formulate a revolutionary negative moral theory approach towards animal liberation. To this convention we also invited comrades who are not part of the animal rights or animal liberation movement: amongst others the spokesperson for animal rights of the biggest German left party DIE LINKE and the assistant chairman of the German Communist Party (DKP). And we were glad that they came and discussed with the movement about their experiences.

One part of our transformative process has been the broadening of issues we are dealing with. Thus we got involved in various left-wing discussions and movements. For instance we invited the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) to give a talk on socialist struggle in Great Britain to promote proletarian internationalism. We had an event with professor Moshe Zuckermann from Tel Aviv about the conflict in the Middle East and the self-abolishment of Zionism by the politics of the Israeli government. We are part of a coalition which tries to promote left-wing debates on different issues e.g. the conflict in Ukraine, the current economic crisis of capitalism or the authoritarian development taking place in Germany and other Western countries.

We were also engaged in organizing support of the biggest strike in recent history in Hamburg. It officially lasted several months in a small company called Neupack (a plastic producer). Unfortunately the colleagues lost their battle due to the aggressive strategy of the company's owner and the social democratic appeasement strategy of the union that is dominated by right-wing social democrats. Furthermore some of us work in the German anti-war movement.

So, it is obvious that we are intertwined with the German progressive movements in various ways. Not all people are socialist or anarchist there. And to be honest, anarchism—but not only anarchism—in Germany has become a very life-stylish, radical chic phenomenon of students addressing subcultural discourses or even neo-conservative ones waving the red and black flag together with an Israeli one when the IDF is dropping bombs on Gaza. So anarchism here has in fact largely become part of the problem instead of the solution. There is no real vital tradition of, let's say, Durruti or Goldman anymore.

Our general line is to work in the best sense of what Rosa Luxemburg called revolutionary realpolitik with all progressive forces of all political branches (anti-imperialist, anti-war, struggles in companies, anti-gentrification e.g.) to form a front of all forces (non-parliamentary as well as parliamentary, unions as well as grassroots initiatives) against capitalism. In this sense we work on the ideological-cultural as well as on the political-economic level. And we stress and insist on the integration of eco-socialist and animal liberation politics into the agenda of the progressive movement. If the animal liberationists and animal rights activists really want to be a part of an anti-capitalist movement that abolishes the present state of things, it has to act like an anti-capitalist movement. Without anti-capitalist praxis it is just lip service.

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

AD: Yes, there are some ways. Speciesism, as a bourgeois ideology in the classical-Marxist sense as historically-necessary false consciousness, prolongs the existence of capitalism because it prevents the people from realizing the roots of exploitation in slaughterhouses are the same for workers as well as for animals. This can be directly observed not only in slaughterhouses. When colleagues are on strike and they denounce their working conditions by referring to animals ("we have to work like animals") on the one hand they express their comprehensible anger. But on the other hand, they distance themselves from the animals and abandon them in their brutal living and working conditions. So they do not realize that their working conditions, the ones of animals and their socially-produced suffering, has common roots.

Speciesism also prolongs the self-alienation of man because it makes humans pretend to be something totally different than animals. It is thus negating the animal and natural needs of humans which obviously have been oppressed in the history of Western civilization. Our comrade Marco Maurizi, an Italian philosopher, once said that the first victim of speciesism is the human animal. This is still true today but on a much higher scale than at the beginning of human times.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

AD: One of the big failures of the animal rights and animal liberation movements until today has been the one-sided focus on a culture revolution, namely regarding a change of individual lifestyle as the main means to achieve a society free from animal exploitation. We think that this strategy obviously has failed and turned out to be the wrong path, especially after the capitalist world system has integrated the

subcultural movements that came to the surface after the student revolts in 1968. To assume that capitalists will stop killing animals simply because we boycott the purchase of animal products is a consumerist ideology that is based on a misinterpretation of capitalism. It is not the demand that decides what is going to be sold, but the capitalist companies that offer what they want to and what they produce. We have to get control over production and the productive forces to decide in a democratic process what needs to be produced and what does not. A comrade said once in a discussion: "We have to own the slaughterhouses to shut them down." And we only can achieve that by class struggle, not by an individualistic consumerist approach. We can learn a lot by analyzing the rest of the green movements. The majority has left out class politics and thus contributed to modernizing capitalism and broadening the cultural bases of the bourgeois hegemony and consent.

On the other hand, boycott totally can make sense as an integral element of a direct confrontation, e.g. an animal test laboratory. So we are not against the use of boycotts to achieve some realistic goals in a struggle, but we reject the idea that by veganizing one friend after the other capitalist society can be changed. Obviously, we still insist on vegan diet and we have not given up veganism as an alternative lifestyle as such. In order to politicize the murder of millions of animals, it is still the best way to say no to consuming the dead bodies of other sentient beings. Apart from that, it also makes sense to point out that capitalism produces false needs and that meat consumption nowadays, at least in the capitalist centers, is one of these false needs. And of course, if you are really convinced that other sentient beings must not be killed for profit and that animals do have the right to live, then you do not consume their corpses or parts of them. Because as long as you take part in the death machinery you are part of it. So it is also a question of solidarity and of your standpoint to say no when others go on contributing to the exploitation and the killing.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

AD: A "veganized capitalism" is possible as well as the "greening of capitalism." One can observe a huge wave of green consumerism rolling over Germany. Veganism and vegetarianism as lifestyles are not commonly accepted, but the grade of acceptance is now higher in the German society than any time before. Vegan cafés, restaurants and cookbooks spring up like mushrooms everywhere. We even have a vegan supermarket chain now (which is highly expensive by the way). On the one hand, this is an enjoyable development since it is easier to step away from meat, milk and other animal products, and to convince people to try to live vegan. But on the other hand, it reinforces a problem that already had existed with veganism. The rising "vegan industry" (mis)uses veganism as another lifestyle option in the neo-liberal mosaic of possible identities, completely depoliticizing it in order to make money with "healthier," "more socially and ecologically just" food, clothes and so on — morals as a marketing strategy of green capital. In this respect, veganism has become—on a relatively small scale of course—another start-up-enterprise idea that has documented once again the astonishing ability of capitalism to absorb

resistant subcultures by making business out of them. To give an example: one of the most successful benefiters of the vegan lifestyle trend in the German speaking parts of Western Europe is Attila Hildmann, who is a cook and has published various cookbooks in which he shows that through veganism he was able to lose a lot of weight and stuff like that. He eventually got rich with all this (he drives a Porsche and loves to swank around with it in interviews). The same guy does not get tired of stressing that veganism is nothing political and that he wants to distance himself from the "filthy" and "bad" activists. And of course he does not say a word about the fact that his business only flourishes because these activists fought for veganism during the last decades.

A capitalist formation in which human society is reconciled with animals and nature, however, is impossible. The liberation of humans and animals in the end is only possible if we abolish capitalism. There will never be a green capitalism, or one in which all animals are free, in the strict and literal sense of the words. Green capitalism is a contradiction in terms, as is "vegan capitalism." As long as it is possible to earn profits by producing meat, capitalists are going to produce it. They also have much more effective means to create the false need of consuming animals, in order to sell their products, than we have to spread vegan consumerism. And we can go even further. As we can learn from the tradition of eco-socialism, capitalism is based on the imperative to increase profits, and the increase of profits is equivalent to an increase in the destruction of nature as a whole. Capitalist economic growth and the destruction of nature including animals are welded together.

Unfortunately, a lot of animal rights activists and animal welfarists agitate for a veganized capitalism, although, subjectively, they only "want to do something for animals." By this form of petit-bourgeois politics they do free marketing for new entrepreneurs. In Germany we have some experience with this kind of development since the Green Party has shown what happens to a party when it degrades from a—at least partly—representation of social movements to a speakers' association of a new green faction of capital.

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

AD: Animals are not part of the proletariat. It is not up to theorists, thinkers or activists to define what they want animals to be part of. As historical materialists we have to analyze the objective historical social praxis and acknowledge what place it assigns to the different actors and objects. Additionally, we have to acknowledge the various natural and gradual differences between humans and animals as well as among animals.

First, to define who belongs to the proletariat and who does not we have to

understand how capitalism works. The capitalist mode of production is fundamentally based on inter-human relationships that are mediated with each other. On the one hand we have the market relation. All humans sell and buy commodities on the market and by doing so they unintentionally organize social labour. On the other hand we have the class relation in the production process, which undermines the apparently equal market relations. Capitalists buy the labour force of the workers to let them produce commodities and by doing so let them produce surplus value. The class relation only exists because the work force is also a commodity which is sold and bought on the market.

If you now look at animals, no matter which sort, you can easily see that animals do not sell their labour force, which most of them obviously do have. They also do not sell and buy their means of subsistence on the market. So, by the objective social determinants given by the capitalist mode of production, animals are not be seen as part of the proletariat. Thus, although animals and workers are both oppressed and exploited by capitalists, they are exploited in different forms. Just the simple fact that they are exploited is not sufficient to count animals as part of the working class.

Secondly, we have different levels of natural potentials. The working class—at least potentially—can control and organize our society. It can and has to re-organize our relationship with nature and animals in a completely different way. Animals cannot do this. And they are not capable of liberating themselves from the oppression and exploitation by capitalists to which they are the object. They cannot build up organization to fight class wars, even though they defend themselves against pain and violence. Thus, animals are the object of liberation and not the subject, whereas the proletariat and the marginalized classes are—at least potentially—the subject of revolution.

We understand the politically-motivated wish to consider animals as active and resisting individuals. But there is a difference between a cow in a slaughterhouse, fighting in agony against its forthcoming murder because of the feeling that something really awful is going to happen, and organized class struggle.

JH: British socialist Richard Seymour has said the relationship between animals and humans in Marxism is under theorized. Do you agree? If so, what areas are particularly lacking?

AD: Yes and no. On the one hand Marx, Engels and the other traditional Marxists as well as the original Western Marxists have not dealt with the relationship between animals and humans in particular. On the other hand, they gave a lot of hints and worked on a lot of topics that help us to understand and conceptualize the relationship between animals and humans in a much better way than the post-structuralists and their various currents which dominate the human-Animal or critical animal studies at Western universities.

In the work of Marx and Engels we can learn that there is no relationship between

"humans" and "animals." Since the historic-specific organization of social labour is the pivotal point of every historic formation it assigns its place in it to everything. In the capitalist mode of production animals are treated as exploitable raw material, as means of production, like the whole of nature, whose special qualities only have meaning as far as the production and profit-making process is concerned. And in capitalism capitalists, not "humans," exploit and murder animals in order to make profit.

Of course, the workers in the slaughterhouses, the testing laboratories and so on, collaborate with the capitalists. But they do it above all because they need to sell their labour force in order to survive. And they are also exploited by the capitalists. In a different way, of course. But we understand, at least, that there are capitalists on the one side and workers and animals on the other in capitalist societies. Especially Marx's Capital helps us to understand that all sources of wealth are exploited by capitalists. Giving us the basic orientation to find these insights, Marx and Engels have contributed more hints to theorize the relationship between animals and humans than lots of works focused directly on their relationship have done.

But it is true that we need to re-think and widen our understanding of the human-animal relationship with the tools all those great progressive thinkers bequeathed to us. Adorno and Horkheimer e.g. described and criticized the dialectical process of civilization. It would be very helpful to analyze the different historical forms of exploitation and oppression of animals in various social formations to understand how the current capitalist form has evolved and how the historical ideologies differentiate from the present ones. Another interesting and important thing we have to do is to analyze the actual praxis of animal exploitation. We have to apply the insights of Marx and Engels to the meat industry. We have to deal with the "meat capital" and its role in the formation of imperialist relations between metropolis and satellite. We also need to investigate the ideological forms of thinking of workers in the meat industry. Another important project we can use the classics for could be to draw up a revolutionary negative moral philosophy. Adorno, Marcuse and Luxemburg provide fruitful insights to tie to. There is a need to explore and look for explanations of how exactly the ideological forms of speciesism derive from the political economic base of animal exploitation in capitalism. We can also use Gramsci's work to understand the role of meat capital and its political allies in the political making of the bourgeois hegemony. As you can see, there are a lot of projects we have to pursue which the classics did not deal with and—even more regrettable—even present day eco-socialists have not dealt with yet.

JH: How does the materialist conception of history effect, if at all, your view of how animal liberation can be achieved?

AD: Historical materialism points out that animal liberation is achieved by collective struggle of the working class. Otherwise there is not going to be a reconciled relationship between society on the one hand and nature and animals on the other.

That is the simple truth. As we mentioned above, there is no way to free the animals by consumerism, individualistic tactics, and single issue politics, since the basic problem in our society which makes capitalists kill animals is capitalism. And the capitalist mode of production is a system that is going to colonize and integrate literally everything in the process of making profit for the ruling class. Therefore the answer can only be given as a collective effort in all branches of society against the common enemy.

Another insight you can learn from historical materialism is that exploitation firstly is a question of social praxis and then a question of ideologies and culture. Animals are not exploited because of speciesism or the dualism between reason and nature. Bourgeois ideologies like that only exists because of the exploitation of animals. That's why deconstructionism and other idealistic approaches like Singer's, Regan's and so on fail. The political and theoretical representatives of those currents tend to stay on the level of appearances. Therefore they are missing the point of what is to be done for liberating the animals.

That does not mean thinkers should stop criticizing ideologies. The critique of ideology is a necessity we cannot leave aside because the different forms of false consciousness obscure and legitimize political-economic oppression and exploitation. Thus, they keep the people away from acknowledging their situation, the situation of the animals and the destruction of nature.

Laurie Penny's species politics are disappointing

Laurie Penny, a talented British writer, is a rising star among the current generation of international leftists. Her blog, "Penny Red," was shortlisted for the Orwell Prize, and she has subsequently written for the socialist Morning Star and progressive New Statesman, among other publications. While Penny's work stresses intersectionality, the public statements she's made regarding non-human animals are disappointingly reactionary.

The comments were made in a 2009 post to her blog, subtitled "fuck the animals." One hopes that in the intervening years her views have evolved. But evidence of such is not readily available. After justifiably critiquing sexist advertising campaigns run by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, making points feminist animalists have made many times, Penny launched into a broader, problematic attack on animals.

"In case it wasn't clear already, yes, I do think that women - and men, children and intersex people for that matter - are more important than animals," Penny said. "I don't get warm fuzzy feelings for 90% of the animal kingdom. I couldn't care less if pandas finally become extinct despite millions of pounds of national and international money being poured into trying to make them fuck."

The extinction point was obviously absurd, given that species preservation is

primarily an environmental concern, not an animalist one. But more troublesome was the false dichotomy she established between political work on behalf of humans and political work on behalf of animals. Many people do both, and Penny's division ignored how speciesism undergirds many forms of human oppression and exploitation. It is no accident, for instance, that throughout history dominant human groups have justified their domination of subordinate human groups by likening the latter to animals.

"Sure, animal cruelty is bad, it probably shouldn't happen, I'm definitely not down with the kitten-microwavers, but at the end of the day, I prefer people," Penny said, in what was obviously an attempt at humor but nonetheless reinforces the perception animal exploitation is an individual problem, rather than a structural one. Further, Penny supported vivisection. "I'm behind animal testing, if it saves lives, which it does," she said, before making light of horrific non-human suffering. "I'd kick a hundred kittens in the face to save one AIDS victim. I'd shave several litters of puppies to save one junkie. I would even inconvenience an asthmatic gerbil to save James Purnell."

Here Penny used vivisection as the form of exploitation with which to ground debate. This choice was disingenuous, given that vivisection is the only type of use of animal use in which it could be plausibly argued vital human interests were at stake. In the issue of animal agriculture, for instance, which accounts for countless more non-human lives, all that's at risk is human gustatory preference. Still, it's worth engaging her pro-vivisection position. Never mind that animals are not human analogues and research on them often produces misleading results. Never mind there are alternatives. Never mind that most vivisection is done to test redundant consumer products. The real question is why is it acceptable to torture animals, many of whom undoubtedly have higher levels of consciousness than human infants?

One hopes Penny's perspective on animals have developed since writing this. She has a bright future ahead of her, and it would be tragic for her to continue to see the overwhelming majority of sentient life on this planet as mere resources for humans. Such a stance contradicts the admirable sympathy for the oppressed and exploited which runs through all of her work.

Imprisoned Luxemburg identified with animals

While imprisoned for her opposition to World War I, the German communist leader Rosa Luxemburg identified with non-human animals in her letters on a number of occasions. Perhaps most interestingly she did so in a message to her comrade Sophie Liebknecht, in a letter dated mid-December, 1917, after the Russian Revolution.

Addressing Liebknecht by her nickname 'Sonichka,' Luxemburg described a recent traumatic experience at Breslau prison. "In the courtyard where I walk, army lorries

often arrive, laden with haversacks or old tunics and shirts from the front; sometimes they are stained with blood. They are sent to the women's cells to be mended, and then go back for use in the army," Luxemburg said.

Generally, the army lorries were dragged by horses, but one day she saw buffaloes pulling the loads, who were war 'trophies' from Romania. "The soldier-drivers said that it was very difficult to catch these animals, which had always run wild, and still more difficult to break them in to harness," Luxemburg said. "They had been unmercifully flogged – on the principle of 'vae victis' [woe to the conquered]."

She contrasted the wide spaces and ample food they must have experienced in Romania with the brutal treatment they received when 'tamed.' "There are about a hundred head in Breslau alone," Luxemburg said. "Unsparingly exploited, yoked to heavy loads, they are soon worked to death."

On the particular day which she recalled in the letter, harnessed buffaloes were unable to pull an overburdened lorry into the prison. "The soldier-driver, a brute of a fellow, belaboured the poor beasts so savagely with the butt end of his whip that the wardress at the gate, indignant at the sight, asked him if he had no compassion for animals," Luxemburg said. "'No more than anyone has compassion for us men,' he answered with an evil smile, and redoubled his blows."

Intentionally or not, the driver's answer spoke to the interconnected nature of different forms of oppression and exploitation, including speciesism. Eventually, the buffaloes were able to drag the heavy lorry into the prison. All of the animals were exhausted, but one was visibly injured.

"The one that was bleeding had an expression on its black face and in its soft black eyes like that of a weeping child – one that has been severely thrashed and does not know why, nor how to escape from the torment of ill-treatment," Luxemburg said. "I stood in front of the team; the beast looked at me: the tears welled from my own eyes. The suffering of a dearly loved brother could hardly have nursed me more profoundly, than I was moved by my impotence in face of this mute agony."

She suspected the injured buffalo yearned for the more free, less trying times in Romania. "Instead, [the buffalo experienced] the hideous street, the foetid stable, the rank hay mingled with mouldy straw, the strange and terrible men – blow upon blow, and blood running from gaping wounds." Luxemburg said. "Poor wretch, I am as powerless, as dumb, as yourself; I am at one with you in my pain, my weakness, and my longing."

Luxemburg's comparison between her prison experience and the suffering of this injured buffalo is somewhat ridiculous and a reflection of what might be called her human privilege. After all, by her own admission, these animals would quickly be worked to death. Further, she presumably knew and accepted the risks of her anti-war activism. But the comparison clearly comes from a well-intentioned place. Given

the deep love she felt for her cat Mimi and examples like this of her inter- species compassion, one suspects she would be a strong advocate for animals had the Marxism of her era been less anthropocentric.

Chomsky envisions vegetarian future

Noam Chomsky, the renowned socialist intellectual, believes that human society will eventually transition to vegetarianism due to concern for animals. Chomsky's academic influence is hard to overstate. According to the Chicago Tribune, in 1993 he was "the most often cited living author. Among intellectual luminaries of all eras, Chomsky placed eighth, just behind Plato and Sigmund Freud."

Also in 1993, Chomsky made the prediction in an interview with Z Magazine co-founder Michael Albert, according to archival-website Third World Traveler. "I don't know if it's a hundred years, but it seems to me if history continues--that's not at all obvious, that it will--but if society continues to develop without catastrophe on something like the course that you can sort of see over time, I wouldn't be in the least surprised if it moves toward vegetarianism and protection of animal rights," Chomsky said. "In fact, what we've seen over the years--and it's hard to be optimistic in the twentieth century, which is one of the worst centuries in human history in terms of atrocities and terror and so on--but still, over the years, including the twentieth century, there is a widening of the moral realm, bringing in broader and broader domains of individuals who are regarded as moral agents."

While Chomsky said he did not practice prefigurative vegetarianism, he believed the issue of eating animals and vivisecting them was an important one. "Experiments are torturing animals, let's say," Chomsky said. "That's what they are. So to what extent do we have a right to torture animals for our own good? I think that's not a trivial question."

When Albert asked Chomsky if animalists were politically ahead of the curve, Chomsky was noncommittal, but did not dismiss the idea. "It's possible," Chomsky said. "I think I'd certainly keep an open mind on that. You can understand how it could be true. It's certainly a pretty intelligible idea to us. I think one can see the moral force to it." Chomsky went on to trace the evolution of human attitudes toward animal suffering over past few centuries. "You don't have to go back very far to find gratuitous torture of animals," Chomsky said. "The Cartesians thought they had proven that humans had minds and everything else in the world was a machine. So there's no difference between a cat and a watch, let's say. It's just the cat's a little more complicated."

Using a frustratingly limited definition of 'gratuitous torture' Chomsky continued to recount Cartesian speciesism. "You go back to the court in the seventeenth century, and big smart guys who studied all that stuff and thought they understood it would as a sport take Lady So-and-So's favorite dog and kick it and beat it to death and so on and laugh, saying, this silly lady doesn't understand the latest philosophy, which

was that it was just like dropping a rock on the floor," Chomsky said. "That's gratuitous torture of animals. It was regarded as if we would ask a question about the torturing of a rock. You can't do it. There's no way to torture a rock. The moral sphere has certainly changed in that respect. Gratuitous torture of animals is no longer considered quite legitimate."

Socialize veterinary care

Refusing treatment to sick animals whose human guardians are unable to pay for care is a "familiar" scenario to veterinarians, according to Phyllis DeGioia, a writer for the Veterinary Information Network. "Financially strapped owners often turn to euthanasia to alleviate an animal's suffering — sometimes prematurely," DeGioia wrote.

Americans spent $14.21 billion on veterinary bills for their companion animals last year, according to a projection made by the American Pet Products Association. Despite this seemingly large figure, my guess is that given companion animals' low status and the limited funds of most human guardians, animals are actually given lethal injections quite frequently, when potential treatment plans exist. We need socialized animal care.

It certainly would have helped Americas, a springer Labrador-retriever mix, and her guardian Kim Welch. "In 2007, Americas was diagnosed with a nerve-sheath tumor just millimeters from her heart. Removing the tumor from its difficult location would require amputating the dog's shoulder and foreleg. The risky surgery cost $7,000 — money that Welch, a hairdresser and single mother, did not have," DeGioia wrote. Ultimately, Americas received surgery and survived, but only after Welch was forced to sell her belongings on eBay and received donations from Canine Cancer Awareness and a mysterious benefactor. Most companion animals and their human guardians are presumably not so lucky.

Now, I should say, that I agree with the socialist animalist Henry Stephen Salt who believed that in the future domestication as a whole, including the domestication of companion animals, would and should be rejected. "The injustice done to the pampered lap-dog is as conspicuous, in its way, as that done to the over-worked horse, and both spring from one and the same origin—the fixed belief that the life of a 'brute' has no 'moral purpose,' no distinctive personality worthy of due consideration and development," Salt argued, writing in 1892. "In a society where the lower animals were regarded as intelligent beings, and not as animated machines, it would be impossible for this incongruous absurdity to continue."

Still, within the context of current-day domestication, public non-human healthcare would improve the quality of life of millions of companion animals in this country alone. Progressive groups should emphasize the socialization of veterinary care in their platforms. This would attract animalists to a leftist coalition at next to no ideological cost, as genuine progressives will support the socialization of significant

industries regardless of how it might help non-humans.

In this moment when leftists seem to be converging for the first time in a generation, animalists need to think about how we fit into broader progressive struggles. What demands can we put forward that might be supported by other leftists who might not yet be on board with the entire animalist project? I've seen this discussion begin to play out in a number of different outlets.

Writing in Socialist Worker, for instance, animalist Alan Peck offered four short-term demands that he believed anthropocentric progressives should support. "We should demand an end to the most cruel and environmentally destructive farming practices," Peck wrote. "We should demand the repeal of the fascist Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act. We should demand an end to massive subsidies for animal agriculture. And we should demand that all people have access to an affordable, healthy plant-based diet."

This seems like a good start, to which I add socializing veterinary care. I encourage other animalists to begin asking themselves this question. In the short term, what aspects of the animal rights program can we influence broader progressive organizations to adopt?

What can socialist animalists learn from the free produce movement?

Socialist animalists who view the practice of personal veganism as a prerequisite to advocating public veganism should know the history of similar perspectives and tactics in other movements at other times. Because animalists so often associate their struggle with that of abolitionists of human slavery, it's perhaps most worthwhile to focus on the free produce movement.

According to Lawrence B. Glickman, the free produce movement "encouraged consumers to avoid slave-made goods and to purchase products made by 'free labor.' Consciously adopting the strategies of British anti-slavery sugar boycotters of the 1790s, free produce supporters became active in the United States in the 1820s."

The first free produce store opened in Baltimore in 1826, but eventually over 50 stores were situated in eight other states. "Most stores sold clothing and dry goods but some also offered free labor shoes, soaps, ice cream and candy," according to Glickman.

To avoid slave-produced goods, free produce stores often imported sugar from Java, Malaysia and Mexico. This, writes T. Stephen Whitman, "led to higher priced and often lower-quality goods. Efforts to obtain free labor grown cotton and coffee encountered similar problems. In short, purchasers of free produce had to acknowledge that they paid higher prices than for slave-made commodities."

The institution of slavery was not threatened by this individualistic, consumer-

based strategy. "There is little evidence that slaveholders or their political representatives paid much attention to (the free produce movement) and no evidence that it had a discernible economic impact on them," Glickman writes.

By the 1840s, many abolitionists who had previously supported free produce were changing their minds. "The World Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840, held in London, rejected a call for its supporters to endorse free produce, and other anti- slavery bodies followed suit," according to Whitman.

The famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison eventually opposed the free produce movement, arguing, "These (slavery) productions are so mixed in with the commerce, manufactures, and agriculture of the world...so indissolubly connected with the credit and currency of the country--that, to attempt to seek the subversion of slavery by refusing to use them, or to attach moral guilt to the consumer of them, is, in our opinion, alike preposterous and unjust."

Garrison argued, as Glickman summarizes here, that "even if it were possible to divest oneself from all slave-made goods, the quest for what one free produce advocate called 'clean hands' diverted energy from the anti-slavery struggle by shifting the focus to what amounted to a selfish obsession with personal morality."

Abolitionist Elizur Wright argued that the strictures of the free produce movement reduced activists to paralysis. "No anti-slavery agent or other abolitionist must now travel in stage or steam-boat, for the sheets and table cloths of the latter are of cotton," Wright said. "No abolitionist can any longer buy a book, or take a newspaper printed on cotton paper."

Opposing the free produce movement's tactics, abolitionist Wendell Phillips proclaimed he would be perfectly at ease attending the "Great Judgement" in slave-produced clothing. Garrison struck a similar note, saying, abolitionists "claimed for themselves, almost in the name of slaves, the right above all others to wear the product of their blood and travail."

Ultimately, slavery was abolished, with, according to Glickman, little to no help from the free produce movement. According to the sources I've found, most abolitionists did not avoid slave-produced goods. Animalists should study this historical boycott, as well as other examples of consumer activism, more closely. Some of the lessons might not apply to our movement, but no doubt many will.

Salt was a socialist and pioneering animalist

Henry Stephens Salt was a British anti-speciesist and socialist whose influence on the animalist movement perhaps cannot be overstated. According to Bernard Unti, Salt's "prescient work 'Animals' Rights' (1892) anticipates virtually all of the important modern arguments in favor of animals' interests." He influenced

prominent 20th-century animalists such as Mohandas Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy.

Salt, it should be said, was a Fabian socialist, a type harshly criticized by many revolutionaries of the time as being overly reformist. The Irish republican and socialist James Connolly, for instance, had this to say regarding the subset: "The Fabian Society recruits itself principally among the astute bourgeoisie, whose aim it is to emasculate the working class movement by denying the philosophy of the class struggle, [and] weakening the belief of the workers in the political self-sufficiency of their own class."

Salt upheld animals' right to live, so long as they did not pose a genuine threat to humans, in a way that distinguished him from many of his welfarist contemporaries.

"Even the leading advocates of animals' rights seem to have shrunk from basing their claim on the only argument which can ultimately be held to be a really sufficient one—the assertion that animals, as well as men, though, of course, to a far less extent than men, are possessed of a distinctive individuality, and, therefore, are in justice entitled to live their lives," Salt wrote. "It is of little use to claim 'rights' for animals in a vague general way, if with the same breath we explicitly show our determination to subordinate those rights to anything and everything that can be construed into a human 'want.'"

As an agnostic, Salt believed many ideological justifications for animal exploitation could be traced to religious sources. "The first [rationalization] is the so-called 'religious' notion, which awards immortality to man, but to man alone, thereby furnishing (especially in Catholic countries) a quibbling justification for acts of cruelty to animals," Salt wrote.

Like many animalists today, Salt believed our diction helps buttress non- human exploitation. "A word of protest is needed also against such an expression as 'dumb animals,' which, though often cited as 'an immense exhortation to pity,' has in reality a tendency to influence ordinary people in quite the contrary direction, inasmuch as it fosters the idea of an impassable barrier between mankind and their dependents," Salt wrote. "Even the term 'animals,' as applied to the lower races, is incorrect, and not wholly unobjectionable, since it ignores the fact that man is an animal no less than they. My only excuse for using it in this volume is that there is absolutely no other brief term available."

Salt rejected the notion that there was a dichotomy between struggling for the political benefit of animals and struggling for the political benefit of humans. "It is an entire mistake to suppose that the rights of animals are in any way antagonistic to the rights of men," He wrote. "Let us not be betrayed for a moment into the specious fallacy that we must study human rights first, and leave the animal question to solve itself hereafter; for it is only by a wide and disinterested study of both subjects that a solution of either is possible."

Salt's conception of animalism was progressive enough that he even believed the keeping of companion animals would be rejected in the future. "The injustice done to the pampered lap-dog is as conspicuous, in its way, as that done to the over-worked horse, and both spring from one and the same origin—the fixed belief that the life of a 'brute' has no 'moral purpose,' no distinctive personality worthy of due consideration and development," Salt wrote. "In a society where the lower animals were regarded as intelligent beings, and not as animated machines, it would be impossible for this incongruous absurdity to continue."

Finally, as a socialist, Salt believed the exploitation of animals would continue so long as capitalism existed. "In the rush and hurry of a competitive society," Salt wrote, "where commercial profit is avowed to be the main object of work, and where the well-being of men and women is ruthlessly sacrificed to that object, what likelihood is there that the lower animals will not be used with a sole regard to the same predominant purpose?"

Dismissive term for anti-animal socialists needed

Socialists animalists need a dismissive term for those on the anthropocentric left. It could be used in much the same way as socialist-feminists use the portmanteaus "brocialist" and "manarchist" to undermine socialists with reactionary gender politics.

I'm awful at coining catchy, new terms, as this task requires. And I imagine that anti-speciesist socialists as a whole are capable of brainstorming something much better. But as an initial suggestion, I'd like to offer the term "corpsocialist" to define those on the anti-animal left, which is obviously an amalgam of the words "corpse" and "socialist." I hope the portmanteau would bring to mind the eviscerated bodies of the countless animals whose lives and suffering most leftists ignore or minimize.

In a 2013 letter to Socialist Worker, International Socialist Organization member Benjamin Silverman claimed to have coined the term brocialist. "[It] came about some two years ago in one of my many arguments on Reddit forums, a noted Internet hive of sexism and misogyny," Silverman said. "The word 'manarchist' was becoming popular as a means to describe and call out the prevalence of sexists within the anarchist community, and I felt that there was a need for an equivalent epithet for the socialist movement. So 'brocialist' and 'brocialism' was what I came up with."

Speaking to the New Republic, progressive journalist Sarah Jaffe said brocialists reduce feminist priorities to a distraction from the class struggle. "Brocialists," Jaffe said, are "guys who are so enamored of their own radicalness or progressiveness or whateverness that they are convinced they can do no wrong."

In an article for the New Statesmen, left-wing writer Laurie Penny engaged in a dialogue with Marxist author Richard Seymour about brocialism and manarchism.

"My experience is that ‘brocialists' don’t openly embrace patriarchy; they deny it’s a problem," Seymour said. "Or they minimise it. They direct your attention elsewhere: you should be focusing on class. You’re being divisive. You’re just middle class (quelle horreur!). Or they attack a straw ‘feminism’ that is supposedly ‘bourgeois’ and has nothing to say about class or other axes of oppression."

Penny compared the brocialist to his equivalent in the anarchist community. "The brocialist's more chaotic cousin is, of course, the manarchist, who displays many of the same traits in terms of blindness to privilege, casual sexism and a refusal to acknowledge structural gender oppression, but has a slightly different reading list and a more monochrome wardrobe," Penny said.

So how might one use the term corpsocialist, or whatever term we decide will better dismiss speciesist socialists? Let me provide an example. At the 2013 Edward Said Memorial Lecture, Noam Chomsky, perhaps the most widely- respected socialist living in the United States, was asked his opinion on animalism. While Chomsky seems to have expressed more enlightened views on the topic in the past, what he had to offer that day was particularly defensive and reactionary.

"Well, just out of curiosity, do you kill insects, like mosquitos when they're bothering you?" Chomsky asked the questioner to widespread laughter from the speciesist audience. "Or do you think when mosquitoes are carrying malaria we ought to develop means to kill them off?"

Hearing Chomsky's response, for instance, one might say, "God, for someone with vegetarian kids, he sure is a corpsocialist." Now, let's make corpsocialist happen. For a portmanteau, to quote the film "Mean Girls," it's so fetch!

Against security culture in the animalist movement

There are certain kinds of animalists, generally young and male, who are obsessed with security culture. Whatever their intentions may be, I believe the cloak-and-dagger measures they promote are ultimately harmful for our movement. In essence, security culture, as it’s generally understood, are those practices which minimize the risk of police infiltration into small groups involved in illegal actions. These secretive measures are generally premised on the idea, conscious or not, that small numbers of highly-committed individuals can change society. I believe this premise is false. As frustrating as it might be, only the human masses can make change. They cannot be bypassed. Instead, we must engage in the hard work of winning them to our side.

In response, some animalists might argue that security culture should be encouraged so as to defend activists involved in mass — as opposed to individual — struggle against animal exploitation. I’m sympathetic to this idea. After all, capitalists who abuse non-humans are increasingly moving to curtail the democratic

rights of activists whose work would previously have been considered lawful. Unfortunately, mass movements, by their very nature, cannot take place in private. In the United States alone, a successful movement against animal exploitation would require millions and millions of people. Secrecy cannot exist on such a scale. Risk of government repression is inevitable. Trying to impose security culture is the equivalent to administering a cure with side effects worse than the disease it's meant to treat.

For instance, there's a possibility that there are police agents among the nominal animalists I'm networked with on Facebook. Personally, I find such an idea unlikely and hubristic, as I don't think I'm much of a real threat to structural speciesism. But for the sake of argument, let's say there are. I have two general options. The first is that I accept surveillance is an unavoidable risk, the cost of any activism that genuinely undermines animal exploitation. The second is that I become highly selective in terms of who I allow in my social media circle, in the hope of preventing undercover operatives from entering it. Obviously, in my view, the first option is preferred. A mass movement can't be built by atomized individuals communicating via invisible ink from disparate islands of security culture. The growth of our struggle, whether offline or online, requires networking with those we don't know.

It should also be said there is a large degree of posturing in the performance of security-culture measures, which is embarrassing to watch. Most of those who zealously advocate these practices are not involved in illegal activity on behalf of animals. And given the government's technological capabilities, we should assume that if the capitalist state wants certain information, it has the means of obtaining it, regardless of animalists' precautions.

We should reject security culture, at least as it's currently understood. It's most often premised on a model of change — created by a small group, operating in secret — that has never worked, is not working, and will never work. As conservative as the human masses might be, they are, like it or not, the fundamental agents of progressive change. Individuals hoping to become these agents themselves, so as to skip past winning the masses over, are engaged in self-indulgent grandstanding. Further, even if one rejects this individualistic model of change, attempting to graft security culture onto a nascent movement will only stifle its growth.

Socialist Kshama Sawant discusses animal issues

If the American revolutionary left held an annual award show akin to the Oscars — I'm imagining they'd be called the Debsies — Seattle City council member Kshama Sawant would undoubtedly win the category of Best Socialist. Running on a platform of raising the minimum wage to $15 an hour, rent control, and taxing the rich, the Socialist Alternative candidate beat her Democratic opponent in the 2013 election to become the first socialist to win a city-wide vote in Seattle in nearly 100 years. Since her victory, she has helped win a $15 an hour minimum wage for all of Seattle's

workers and helped launch the 15 Now campaign, which is currently active in over 20 cities.

Jon Hochschartner: Why should those concerned by the treatment of animals support you?

Kshama Sawant: A primary example of cruelty towards animals in our times is the corporate American meat and dairy industry. Every year, billions of animals are raised (or more accurately, confined) in unspeakable conditions and inhumanely slaughtered to feed the insatiable profits of the giants of agribusiness. Four top corporations now dominate 80 percent of the American meat and dairy market. With $48 billion in annual revenue, the U.S. dairy industry generates huge profits for its major shareholders by using cruel production methods, like hooking cows to milking machines all day in an unrelenting assembly line.

Factory farms and meat packaging plants also happen to be places with some of the worst forms of exploitation, and where the suffering of animals and workers alike is intense. Agribusinesses and corporate politicians go to great lengths to keep this suffering hidden from most people, as demonstrated by recent Ag-gag bills criminalizing industry whistleblowers. The workers are some of the most marginalized, often undocumented immigrants or otherwise vulnerable, and subject to intimidation and harassment by their bosses. The agribusiness industry is also notorious for its brutal and systematic union busting and for clamping down on conscientious small farmers.

Food monopolies now effectively control the diets of most Americans, from the farm to the dinner table, with ordinary working people given little choice in the process. Animals on factory farms are kept in unsanitary and often painful conditions, injected with artificial growth hormones and given a diet of poorly regulated feed. The combination of unhealthy food products and lack of access to health care has had deleterious effects on public health outcomes in this, the wealthiest country in the world. Tens of millions of dollars are spent every year by corporate executives buying elected officials of the Democratic and Republican parties, to grease their wheels and expand corporate subsidies.

Yet another impact of agribusiness has been the intensification of air and water pollution. Additionally, fast-paced water depletion in many areas of the South and Midwest, such as the Oglala Aquifer in Texas County, Oklahoma, is directly attributable to agribusiness. No price is paid by the giant corporations for looting our natural resources.

Globally, the increased poaching of animals, and the near extinction of countless species, is inextricably linked to the horrifying levels of poverty and exploitation from global imperialism and the process of neoliberalism that has denuded hundreds of millions of people of their basic livelihoods and forced them to live on the margins.

No single question of exploitation – whether it be of animals, or workers, or the environment – can be analyzed in isolation from the others. No solution to these crises is possible in isolation, either. Every day, working people all over the world are exploited and abused so that corporations can make lavish profits. The billions of animals raised and slaughtered in factory farms so they can be packaged and sold by the ton face the same predicament. As long as big business runs our economy, particularly in the presence of weak regulation, animals will continue to be brutalized and workers' basic rights will be violated whenever it is profitable to do so.

People concerned about the treatment of animals should support me because we are, and have to be, part of the same movement and need to fight in solidarity with one another.

The crucial question for both animal rights activists and working people is: how can we stop corporations from exploiting us and everything we care about, only to further add to the already overfull coffers of a tiny global super-elite? We should start by recognizing the common ground we share so we can join forces. Labor, social justice and animal rights activists should link up with those who are fed up with corporate domination of the economy and our political system, the obscene gap between the wealthy and the rest of us, the lack of funding for basic services, education, and health, and the pervasive discrimination of people based on race, gender, and sexual identities. We should struggle alongside the millions of people who are outraged by how big business is ravaging the environment, causing mass extinction and threatening life on earth as we know it, just to make a buck.

This unity should be demonstrated in our activism and the movements we build.

As a Seattle City Councilmember, I have directly challenged big business by fighting for a $15 minimum wage for low wage workers in Seattle and for increased funding for basic human services like homeless encampments and women's shelters. I also supported animal rights activists calling for the closure of an inhumane elephant exhibit at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle.

I recall a recent inspiring example. During the Seattle City budget discussions, I hosted a People's Budget Town Hall in Council Chambers, to begin a movement for an alternative to a corporate business-as-usual budget. We had activists from human services, economic justice, and animal rights groups gathered there. One of the passionate animal rights activists, who was there to advocate for the elephants at Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, also spoke in solidarity with homeless people.

Expressions of solidarity like this reflect an important step forward, but we have to go further. We need to build a political alternative that reflects our common interests. The United States has a two party system where the Democrats and Republicans are both funded by and thoroughly beholden to big business. People

who want to fight against corporate control and provide solutions to the numerous problems it creates – including the cruelty towards animals – are not represented by either party. We urgently need independent candidates and a new political party that gives voice to working people, poor people, environmentalists, and animal rights activists alike, so they have a space to discuss their issues, coordinate struggles, and democratically decide how to take the movement forward.

As a socialist, I use my elected office to fight against injustice wherever it rears its ugly head. At the same time, I work to organize and empower ordinary people to weaken the stranglehold that corporations have over our economy and political system. In this struggle, we open the door to a world where neither workers nor animals are ruthlessly exploited for the sake of profit. For these reasons, I believe people concerned about the mistreatment of animals should support me.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the fights for socialism and better treatment for animals intertwined?

KS: As a socialist, I don't believe injustice in any form should be tolerated. I subscribe to the idea that an injury to one is an injury to all. I feel a natural solidarity with those fighting against the mistreatment of animals, especially considering how egregious the brutality is in the corporate animal industry.

There is a direct link between socialism and the animal rights struggle. The animal and food industries are among the most exploitative in the world, not only of animals, but of working people, too. Long hours, low pay, and unsafe, even traumatizing, working conditions are standard fare on factory farms, which employ largely immigrant labor forces that are also oftentimes deprived of their right to organize into unions. Putting an end to the factory farm model that is responsible for so much cruelty to animals also means getting rid of a model that is fundamentally harmful to the workers on those farms. Animal rights activists and socialists should work together on these struggles.

There is also a more fundamental connection. When we try to understand the causes of the problems we see in the world today, whether we are talking about low wages, war, environmental destruction or widespread animal cruelty, it's clear that they are not simply the product of a handful of bad businesses or industries. The problems are systemic, caused by a capitalist economic model that bases itself on exploitation and greed and puts nearly all of the world's resources and wealth under the control of a tiny elite.

The decisions of what things to produce, how to produce them, and how society's wealth is distributed are made by this small group of people, whose only interest is maximizing profit. It is no wonder that working people, animals, and the environment all suffer extreme exploitation and abuse under capitalism.

I am fighting for a global democratic socialist society. In such a world, it will be

possible to end exploitation and abuse because under socialism ordinary people will democratically decide what things to produce, how to produce them, and how to distribute society's wealth. Rather than corporations making these decisions based on profit, people can decide these things based on how to best serve their needs.

Working people will not choose to brutally exploit themselves so that a tiny elite can live in obscene luxury. Similarly, they will not choose to maintain an unsustainable, unhealthy and inhumane animal and food industry, which brutalizes billions of animals every year and creates serious health risks for humanity in the process. Socialism will make it possible to live in a world where animals are treated humanely. Capitalism has proven itself not only incapable of delivering this, but also has been a fundamental perpetrator of animal cruelty.

JH: What public policy proposals, that you can take action on, will you or have you supported for animals while in office?

KS: In recent months a grassroots movement emerged to demand that the elephant exhibit at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle be closed and to call for the elephants to be moved to sanctuary. I have supported this movement, using my position on the City Council to endorse it while also submitting an amendment to the City budget that made funding for the zoo contingent on the closure of the elephant exhibit.

Although the budget amendment failed to garner support from any other Councilmember, zoo officials announced in mid-November that they were closing the elephant exhibit. This was an important victory that would not have been possible without the determined efforts of the activists who forced the City and zoo officials to listen to their demands. That said, the zoo has also said it plans to move the elephants to another zoo and not to sanctuary, which I have opposed and which activists are mobilizing against. That struggle continues and I will keep supporting it.

I invite people from various starting points of social, economic, environmental, and animal justice to join with me to build more powerful movements for real change.

Seymour refreshingly sympathetic to animalism

For someone who runs a blog called Lenin's Tomb, Richard Seymour, author of "The Liberal Defense of Murder," has relatively modern views of non-human animals. While by no means advocating an end to animal exploitation, and benefiting from the low expectations created by the typically hateful speciesism of his socialist milieu, Seymour sounded surprisingly sympathetic to animalist thought in a late 2012 review of Alasdair Cochrane's "An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory."

For those not familiar with his work, Seymour is one of the most widely respected thinkers among the emerging generation of socialists. Besides authoring a number

of well-received books, and running the aforementioned blog, which is influential, he writes for the Guardian and Al Jazeera, among other publications. Seymour's public break with the British Socialist Workers Party have led many—who wouldn't otherwise—to question the efficacy of the sect form, which stresses the need for top-down organization and ideological uniformity. His resignation inspired reform efforts elsewhere, exemplified by the Renewal Faction, a group which was ultimately expelled from the United States' International Socialist Organization.

Seymour's review, which appeared in the London School of Economics and Political Science's Review of Books, argued that, "our relationships with other animals have been under-theorised in most political traditions," including his own Marxism. Continuing, Seymour describes critical animal studies as a "neglected field of political discourse" and "a highly interesting issue." For Seymour, the dearth of socialist theory on species domination needn't be the case. "Emancipatory ideologies should, in theory, be well-placed to handle animal rights," He said. "But that isn't always necessarily so. Marxism, for example, is a profoundly humanist doctrine, not known for its concern with animal rights. There are resources within Marxism for addressing animal rights, emphasising their exploitation and un-freedom, but that depends on Marxists being convinced that there is anything illegitimate about the exploitation and un-freedom of animals."

Seymour was most impressed by the contributions feminists have made to the field of critical animal studies. "It is among feminists that some of the most intriguing and telling writing on animals has been produced," Seymour said. "Carolyn Merchant famously argued that the subjugation of nature heralded by the 'scientific revolution' and its major apostles such as Francis Bacon, was bound up with the emergence of a violent patriarchy. The exploitation of animals is thus an expression of masculinist assertion over a feminised earth. Similarly, Carol Adams maintained that the reduction of animals to 'meat' for consumption is part of modern masculinity, and of the same process that reduces women to 'meat' for consumption."

Seymour concludes his review with an apparent endorsement for intersectional politics that take the question of species into consideration. "The inter-dependence of all animals, the relations between the oppression of human and non-human animals, is potentially one of the most productive areas of inquiry," he said. One hopes he will contribute to this inquiry, as he is uniquely qualified to do so on the socialist left. Obviously he is a brilliant thinker. But perhaps more importantly, his credentials as a Marxist are unimpeachable. Were he to publicly support revolutionary change for animals, or even just a robust reformism, he would help tip the scales against the most virulently speciesist elements of the socialist left.

Is there any evidence Goldman wrote animalist article?

Imagine my excitement as a socialist animalist, or whatever we decide to call ourselves, when I read the great American anarchist Emma Goldman had written an

article that was deeply sympathetic to non-human animals and endorsed public vegetarianism. Unfortunately there doesn't appear to be any evidence Goldman wrote the article in question, which was a review of Upton Sinclair's novel 'The Jungle.'

Goldman was, according to future FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, one of the "most dangerous anarchists" in America. She was arrested more often than can be recounted here, for allegedly inciting a riot of the unemployed among many other things. She was a feminist who, according to a number of historians, played a mentoring role to Margaret Sanger, the birth-control pioneer who founded Planned Parenthood. She was an atheist and an early advocate of gay rights. Unlike many of her leftist contemporaries, Goldman early on recognized the seeds of totalitarianism planted by the Bolsheviks in Russia.

Anne Fernihough identifies Goldman as the author of the 1906 review, which appeared in Goldman's publication Mother Earth, in Fernihough's 2013 book 'Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism.' But all of the other sources I've come across identify the author merely by the pseudonym V eritas.

Using the slaughterhouse as a metaphor, Veritas saw connections between the treatment of animals and the treatment of humans in Sinclair's novel. "It is for the most part a tale of the abattoirs, those unspeakable survivals in our Christendom in which man reeks his savage and sensual will on the lesser animals," the unnamed writer said. "Indirectly it is a story of the moral abattoirs of politics, economics, society, religion and the home, where the victims are of the species human, and where man's inhumanity to man is as selfish and relentless as his age-long cruelty to his brothers and sisters just behind him in the great procession."

In calling for public vegetarianism, Veritas tried to give a sense of the overwhelming scope of animal exploitation. "This author uses the squeal, or, rather, the wild death shrieks of agony of the ten millions of living creatures tortured to death every year in Chicago and the other tens of millions elsewhere, to pander to the old brutal, inhuman thirst of humanity for a diet of blood," the anonymous writer said. "The billions of the slain have found a voice at last, and if I mistake not this cry of anguish from the 'killing-beds' shall sound on until men, whose ancestors once were cannibals, shall cease to devour even the corpses of their murdered animal relatives."

It's very possible Fernihough has access to information that I don't, that suggests Veritas was in fact Emma Goldman. Given my politics, I would love this to be case. But sadly I think it's more likely Fernihough made an error of attribution, something that happens to all researchers. There is nothing published under Goldman's own name I've come across that suggests she might have been sympathetic to animalism. Like all public figures of a certain stature, this wouldn't be the first time Goldman was incorrectly quoted. Her most famous saying, "If I can't dance, it's not my

revolution," of which there are many slight variations, is apocryphal, according to Alix Kates Shulman, for instance.

SPUSA candidate discusses animal issues

Dean Capone, who has announced his intention to seek the 2016 Socialist Party USA presidential nomination, recently gave an interview to me in which he discussed non-human politics. According to his campaign website, he has been an active member of SPUSA and is a former treasurer of the organization's Tampa Bay, Fla., local. He supports a national basic income, union growth, and public ownership of heavy industry.

Jon Hochschartner: Why should those concerned by the treatment of animals vote for you?

Dean Capone: I became vegan as an act of compassion and not economics. But I'm am aware that systemic cruelty, exploitation and destruction of animals is, in fact, an underpinning cause of many social, health and economic issues — in addition to being cruel.

JH: What is Socialist Party USA's official position on animal exploitation? How might it be improved?

DC: [Here's] the party's position: "The Socialist Party recognizes the rights of animals to live free from unnecessary pain and suffering, and the responsibility of people to protect those rights. We support the spaying and neutering of pets to prevent the massive extermination resulting from overpopulation. We oppose entertainment that causes pain to animals. We call for the banning of the fur trade. We support greater inclusion and enforcement of the Endangered Species Act. We call for a ban on animal experimentation for product development, and for an oversight board to examine and limit the use of animals in scientific and medical research. We oppose factory farming practices of overcrowding, drugging, and otherwise cruelly treating animals." I believe this could be improved by taking greater action on these points, as well as partnering with organizations who are not necessarily in support of 'farm' rights, but animal rights.

JH: What do you mean by farm rights as opposed to animal rights?

DC: Socialists sometimes only think of the workers — farmers — and not other species.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the fights for economic justice and better treatment for animals intertwined?

DC: Animal exploitation, destruction and consumption is responsible for a great deal of the health, environmental and economic issues mankind places on its own

species, by willfully exploiting other species. For instance, destruction of the rain forests, catastrophic injuries, poverty and oppression among workers in the industry, the waste of millions of tons of foodstuffs that could feed people, but is instead used to feed animals for destruction. The relationship between class and species is direct. But if you analyze the growth of say, factory farming in the 20th-21st century, I think one could find many indicators that species exploitation and class oppression are one narrative.

Critique of capitalist environmentalism applies to prefigurative veganism

In an early section of his phenomenal book, "Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis," Chris Williams critiques former Vice President Al Gore's influential film on global warming, "An Inconvenient Truth," from a socialist perspective. Animalists should consider this criticism as the points Williams makes about capitalist-inspired efforts to prevent climate change through voluntary lifestyle changes by individuals could and should be applied to similar capitalist-inspired solutions to animal exploitation.

"Not only are some of the solutions proposed by the mainstream environmental movement misguided, but there is often an enormous chasm between the problems environmentalists describe and the solutions many of them propose," Williams said. "While there are many examples, Al Gore's Oscar-winning documentary, An Inconvenient Truth, is a prime case in point. After predicting planet-gone-wild climate gyrations from the continued unsustainable production of greenhouse gases, Gore tells us to consume a bit less stuff, change our light bulbs, make sure our car tires are properly inflated, and bike to work. The gap between ends and means is so absurd as to be laughable."

In a similar way, animalists speak to the public about violence on an incomprehensible scale against animals, before arguing the solution is to buy expensive vegan cupcakes and convince some friends to do the same. Most of the public who are sympathetic to anti-speciest politics correctly recognize their individual sacrifice will make no genuine impact on animal-exploitation industries and understandably forgo what is ultimately a selfish obsession with personal purity.

"More insidiously," Williams continued, "in a move of political jujitsu, the film shifts the weight of change from corporate polluters to individuals." To view the capitalist, who personally makes millions of dollars a year destroying the environment, as equally complicit in the crisis of global warming as the underpaid and overworked laborer who buys the former's products, primarily because they are the cheapest and most convenient, is ignorant and offensive. It's the exact prism through which the rich want the issue seen, because it exonerates them for what they are overwhelmingly responsible. Further, it's the working class who will disproportionately suffer the consequences of global warming and the like, so to argue that they will in some way 'benefit' from environmental devastation is short

sighted.

One can see a similar class-blindness at work in the animalist movement. By focusing on the point of consumption, animalists, whether they intend to or not, suggest the capitalist, who makes millions of dollars a year abusing animals, is equally complicit in animal exploitation as the underpaid and overworked laborer who buys the former's products, primarily because they are cheap, convenient and culturally valued. Again, it's through this lense that the rich want the issue examined. Further, I'd argue the belief that the working class 'benefit' from animal exploitation is dubious at best, given the ways speciesism is used to legitimize capitalist domination, and the obvious negative health and environmental consequences of animal agriculture, which, again, workers disproportionately suffer.

"Much of the environmental movement in the North is consumed by arguing for ordinary people to make sacrifices in order to save the planet," Williams said. "They then wonder why more people aren't on the demonstration against global warming and why the movement isn't more diverse." This state of affairs should sound sadly familiar to animalists. Ultimately, to change it, we must focus our anti-speciesist work on the point of production rather than that of consumption. This means giving up the notion of prefigurative veganism as necessary or even relevant to movement activity. Giving this up, of course, does not mean abandoning the animalist project anymore than saying one doesn't have to live like the subject of the film "No Impact Man" to be a committed or radical environmentalist. Rather it merely means giving up a classist strategy that doesn't work but makes us feel good about ourselves.

Vermont socialist candidate talks species politics

Matthew Andrews, a Vermont socialist, who ran on the Liberty Union Party ticket for Congress. A former member of Socialist Party USA, he spoke to me about his views on animals.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else?

Matthew Andrews : I call myself a socialist, and generally don’t bother with adjectives which I believe are redundant, but within the splits of the left, sometimes I call myself a democratic socialist or libertarian socialist.

I wrestled with the idea of being a Marxist for a long time. I found that I agreed with much of Marx and his methods of reasoning even before I formally studied his works. I believe his ideas come to us indirectly in many ways. There’s a stigma, which isn’t always unfounded, that when people use a famous name as a label, they dogmatically follow that person’s ideas. It’s important to realize Marx was a human being, and not put him, or anyone else, on a pedestal above criticism.

As a graduate student I took a class called the Marxian Theoretical Tradition with Richard Wolff (who now does an excellent radio show and podcast called Economic Update). We read essays from a variety of Marxist schools of thought, all written after Marx's own life. From this class I gained an appreciation for the diversity and debate that can exist under the Marxist umbrella. Marxism isn't about mimicking Marx. It's a rich intellectual tradition that continues to grow.

JH: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

MA: I was an active member of the Socialist Party USA for 13 years. For most of that time I was on the National Committee and even served as male Vice-Chair at one point. I helped build a left-wing caucus that shifted the party away from the social democrat politics of Norman Thomas, and back toward the revolutionary politics of Eugene Debs.

I left after most of my comrades who were disgusted with the presidential nominee and our inability to hold the leadership accountable to numerous democratic decisions. Also, a lot of childish and hostile behavior was going unchecked. This was all happening at the same time as the Occupy movement. My comrades and I were excited by this new revolutionary energy, and felt the factional battle that was necessary to save the SP was not worth the energy in that moment. We wanted to be externally focused.

At this time I had also recently moved to Vermont where we have the Liberty Union Party. Liberty Union is a revolutionary socialist political party that came out of the Vietnam anti-war movement. Liberty Union is a homegrown organization that has some odd quirks, but I have found it to be a welcoming place to organize.

Over this same period of time I have intermittently been involved with the Industrial Workers of the World. I have been involved in organizing campaigns at a cafe and a co-op grocery where I worked for over two years.

My comrades from the SP connected with other new people to build new group, Revolutionary Unity. I also recently joined the WIIU (Workers International Industrial Union). The WIIU was originally a faction that left the IWW with Daniel DeLeon after the anarchists took them over. The WIIU is much like the IWW, but without the burdensome hostility to politics or anarchist organizing principles.

JH: Why should those concerned by the treatment of animals vote for you?

MA: My political perspective begins with idea that life is sacred. This is a universal principle that must include all people and species. As an extension of this, the food, resources, and environment that makes life possible is also sacred. Capitalism makes everything vulgar.

Becoming a vegetarian and a socialist was part of the same journey for me. I made a decision that I would consciously control the things I had power over. I wanted to evaluate my cultural norms from an impartial perspective. I knew I would not kill an animal myself for food so I refused to be a hypocrite.

JH: What public policy proposals, that you could put into place if elected, do you support that would better the treatment of animals?

MA: My first summer after college I worked for GREY2K USA to ban greyhound raising. If elected to Congress I would support strong anti-cruelty laws with penalties that include prison time.

The Farm Bill needs to be completely re-written. My opponent, Peter Welch, voted for the Farm Bill, which cut $8.7 billion from SNAP (food stamps). This will amount to an average cut of $90 per month for beneficiaries for years to come. The poor in the US already don't get enough food assistance. Furthermore, the Farm Bill subsidizes the agribusiness giants, making unhealthy calories cheap. I believe in subsidizing healthy foods that are sustainably produced.

Subsidies for raising livestock must end. This includes re-orienting the mission of the Bureau of Land Management, which caters to the interests of cattle ranchers, rather than the needs of the land and wild animals. Worst among these policies is the killing of wolves and wild horses. This must stop immediately.

I am opposed to the ag-gag laws that are being proposed to censor animal abuse whistle-blowers. Furthermore, law enforcement ought to be trained to go undercover at factory farms and slaughter houses to document and prosecute animal cruelty laws. Corporations and their management must be held accountable for these practices, not just the worker at the bottom of the hierarchy.

I would defend the Endangered Species act, expand our environmental protection laws, and give greater regulatory power to the EPA. Part of protecting animals must include the environment they depend upon.

Finally, I am for limiting the manufacture of guns and ammunition to the most simple kinds of hunting rifles which are sufficient for any legitimate purpose. People should not feel that they must own a gun to protect themselves from other people with guns.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the fights for economic justice and better treatment for animals intertwined?

MA: Most fundamentally, people who are concerned with animals must understand that capitalism creates enormous inequalities that cannot be overcome within the system. The voiceless and oppressed share a common struggle. Animals, the

environment, workers, and people of color around the world are all targets for exploitation and exclusion. Our ability to fight back depends on our unity in action.

Zizek is reformist on animal question

The public statements of Marxist writer Slavoj Zizek, which are sometimes difficult to interpret given his predilection for irony and contrarianism, suggest he supports a lukewarm reformism in regards to the treatment of animals, which, pathetically, makes his species politics more progressive than many socialists. It should be mentioned that though the Slovenian cultural critic may be popular on the left, he's not necessarily respected there. Louis Proyect, for instance, has dismissed him as the intellectual equivalent of a "shock jock," while Noam Chomsky has suggested Zizek's work is "theoretical posturing which has no content."

To begin, there's a widely shared clip on YouTube, which appears to be an excerpt from a 2005 documentary on Zizek, in which Zizek said, speaking of vegetarians, "Degenerates, degenerates. You will turn into monkeys." The statement is so absurdly over the top, one must assume it was intended as humor. Zizek seemed to be more serious in a 2010 lecture at the Birkbeck Institute, in which he appeared to empathize to a limited degree with animal victims of human violence, while explicitly distancing himself from the most prominent contemporary thinker associated with animalism.

"My next example is animal rights," Zizek started. "I mean I am not becoming Peter Singer, don't be afraid of that." Whatever criticisms animalists have of Singer, we should be aware Zizek almost certainly used the Australian philosopher as a stand-in for all opposed to anthropocentrism. While Zizek appears to have said some quite complimentary things about Singer in the past, his prefatory statement here should be interpreted as an attempt at speciest bonding, in which Zizek reassured the audience of his continued support for human supremacy, before launching into a tepid criticism of animal exploitation. "We know what we are doing to animals," Zizek continued. "You know how chicken are grown. You know how pigs are grown. It's a nightmare, but how do we survive? We know it, but we act as if we do not know."

Before describing the horrific results of vivisection, Zizek warns the audience he is overly emotional about the topic, as if his reaction was unjustified in the context of animal treatment. "And here I'm a little bit sentimental," Zizek said. "I remember years ago I saw a photo of a cat, immediately after this cat was submitted to some rather unpleasant experiment." His description of the experiment as 'rather unpleasant' is absurd given the brutal description that follows. One might similarly say, after seeing a beaten human face resulting from a batched mugging, that the victim had a 'rather unpleasant' walk in the park.

"This experiment was under the pretext of testing how a living organism — how much pressure and hits can it endure," Zizek said. "It's not immediately clear to me

how this would help people." One can infer here Zizek believed, with obvious anthropocentrism, that if the experiment somehow assisted humans it would be justified. "The cat was put in a centrifuge and it turned like crazy," Zizek said, before making a genuinely perceptive observation into non-human perspective. "What you then got at the end was a cat with literally broken limbs, and most shocking to me most of the hair was gone. But it was still alive and just looking into the camera. And here I would like to ask the Hegelian question. What did the cat see in us? What kind of a monster?"

The year prior, in his book "Violence: Six Sideways Reflections," Zizek made a similar point regarding our willful ignorance of animal exploitation. "What about animals slaughtered for our consumption?" He said. "Who among us would be able to continue eating pork chops after visiting a factory farm in which pigs are half-blind and cannot even properly walk, but are just fattened to be killed?" While obviously preferable to endorsing the heightened suffering in industrial agriculture, Zizek's condemnation specifically of factory farms disappointingly suggests he might approve of less modern and potentially more 'gentle' methods of killing non-humans. Were we to move such non-tactical reformism onto the terrain of the worker's movement, he would no doubt recognize and oppose it.

Zizek is so prolific it would be near impossible to review all of his writing and lectures that touch on species politics. Frankly he is held in low-enough regard by many on the left that it would not be worth the time. But I believe the examples I've provided here are representative. He's a reformist on the animal question, which to the left's discredit, puts him ahead of many socialists.

Bill Martin discusses animals, Maoism, and more

Bill Martin, a professor of philosophy at DePaul University, emerged from the United States' Maoist movement and is currently working with the Kasama Project. He is the author of 'Ethical Marxism: The Categorical Imperative of Liberation,' which among other things, addresses the treatment of animals.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else?

Bill Martin: I consider myself to be a communist, who is working for a world without classes and without exploitation and domination. To be very specific, though without explaining much of anything, I came through the Maoist movement, have been very influenced in recent years by Alain Badiou, and even more recently by Buddhism (and I practice Zen). I am working toward a synthesis that contains and brings together elements of all three.

JH: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

BM: I worked with organized Maoism, specifically the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, for about 26 years. I was never an actual member of that group, but at times I did work with them very closely, for example going to Peru when the leader of the Sendero Luminoso was captured and threatened with summary execution, and writing a book with the leader of that party, Bob Avakian (we drafted the book in 2002 and it was published in 2005, it's called 'Marxism and the call of the future'). In the years 2003 to 2006 and beyond that group went through some changes that made it impossible for me to work with them anymore (though I did not know about many of these changes until early 2008, and some things I am still learning), and since then I have been working with the Kasama Project, which aims to reconcieve and to re-group around the idea of communism—for some of us this is "post-Maoist," for others it is post-Trotskyist, and even post-anarchist.

JH: Tell us a little bit about your book 'Ethical Marxism.' Would anti-speciesist leftists be interested in it? If so, why?

BM: My main aim in the book was to show that Marxism needs to be motivated first of all by an "ethical moment," one that is not generated on a merely utilitarian basis or by any conception of interest, including class interest. Although there are important differences, I think there are some ways in which my conception of the "ethical moment" is not so different from what Badiou means by "politics" as an "event." For Badiou, however, politics does not seem to have anything to do with non-human animals (or even the human as an animal) or ecology, and here we are far apart. In the book I took Kant as the starting place for an ethics set against utility and interest, and I developed my argument on the basis of some twentieth-century Kantian thinkers (or thinkers who have a strong Kantian element), such as Sartre, Derrida, and Davidson.

At the center (literally) of the book is a chapter titled "The animal question," where I try to show that the treatment of animals in the "global industrial food-animal production system" is a clear evil that cannot be fully understood in categories of human interest, and that, any philosophy (Marxism or whatever) that aims toward a world of mutual flourishment cannot avoid this question. I also argue that the assumption that animals are "natural commodities" because it has always been understood that animals are mere things is illegitimate, that many cultures have oral or written records of the traumatic passage into eating animals. I argue that this is the beginning of reification—"thingification" of the world, and that, ultimately, this state of animal reification has to be resolved. It would be highly speculative to claim to know exactly how this might happen, but, for sure, there will be no society of mutual flourishment that contains anything even remotely like the industrial food-animal production system. Ultimately it seems to me that a society that would deserve the name "communism" will not be one in which people eat or otherwise abuse or enslave animals; to put things more positively, communism will be a society in which humanity has a completely and radically re-worked relationship with animals and with our planet in general.

JH: How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left?

BM: I really don't know. As you probably know, in much of "the left" there is an aversion to theory and an aversion to vegetarianism. I don't know that most of the people who have responded to my book, or to the animal chapter, have really taken the arguments seriously or tried to follow the arguments that I actually make. As usual, they just say the same bullshit about how meat tastes good and how vegans are jerks or whatnot … the usual stuff, that, as I say in the book, is dealt with quite brilliantly in the episode of The Simpsons where Lisa Simpson becomes a vegetarian.

On the other hand, I have a friend who gave a talk about the book, and she said that, initially, she planned to focus on her disagreement with the animal arguments, but that, in getting further into exploring the arguments, she found that not only did she agree with them, furthermore this caused her to become a vegetarian herself. So, this was very heartening.

As far as general reception on "the left," I really did have large ambitions for the book (and, as you know, it is very long). I really wanted to re-cast some things. As for almost everything that calls itself "Marxism" of one sort or another, though, there is a great deal of imperviousness to re-casting, most of it, and I think just as much anarchism or "socialism" in some "softer" sense, is stuck in a deep rut or series of ruts. I would even give the name "hatred of philosophy" to one of these ruts, and at the same time I would reiterate something I said in the book, that, when it comes to the animal question (which is really an interrelated group of questions), and especially the challenge to make changes in one's life in terms of what one eats, most philosophers are all too happy to revert to the usual bullshit, too.

So, that is what the book is up against, even as I have tried, and am working now, to go beyond the book in significant ways. Influenced more by Badiou, Plato, and Buddhism–rather than, just to be formulaic about it, Derrida, Kant, and Judaism/Christianity, I am going in directions that could be called more "ontological" rather than "epistemological." And yet I still think the book is going in the right direction and could play a good role for whatever parts of the left, Marxism, or, even better, communism, that would open themselves to my arguments.

JH: If you belong to an anti-capitalist organization, does it have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

BM: The Kasama Project at the present time is involved in the process of deciding what sort of organization it is going to be, and on what its official positions on different subjects will be. As a matter of fact, a national convention will take place this month (October 2014), and I think Kasama will be a different thing after that

point, though I don't know exactly what that will be. I know that there is a basic consensus to not just repeat the party-forms of the past.

Kasama has paid a good deal of attention to ecological questions, as of course anyone must in the world today. However, like most of "the left," there is not the sense that these questions are intimately related to the animal question. And, indeed, there is the usual, I would say "macho," posturing about how it is somehow "leftist" or "Marxist" or "working-class" to eat meat and to say obnoxious things about vegetarianism or "those horrible vegans."

Even without the more general questions of ecological sustainability, there is simply the question of the horrible cruelty toward animals that is the daily workings of industrial food-animal production system (and that is not addressed by the less than one-percent of food-animal production that comes from "free-range," which is usually not all that it claims to be anyway, or by some proposal for something that could be done in the distant future). I believe it is central to the very idea of "the ethical" that this question be understood in its own terms, apart from how this cruelty might rebound upon humanity. By the way, I argued in one of my other books ('Humanism and its aftermath') that Ursula Le Guin's novels 'The Word for World is Forest' and 'The Dispossessed' give us models for thinking ethical connection beyond the sorts of "material" connections that are forged through common interests. Or, to use other examples that involve humans (and that I discussed in 'Ethical Marxism'), the fact that the horrible destruction that was wrought on the people of Vietnam has not rebounded upon most people in the United States (and certainly not upon the politicians and generals who prosecuted the war) does not make what was done to the people of Vietnam (and that is still being done to them in the form of all of the toxins, including massive amounts of carcinogens, dropped on that country) any less of a moral horror and a crime against humanity (and undoubtedly against nature and countless animals as well).

And yet, at the same time, these things are rebounding against humanity; the industrial food-animal production system is fundamentally unsustainable and is leading to fundamental ecological unsustainability. All of this points to a fundamental fact about capitalism, too—that the kinds of economic conversion that are necessary for even going forward with the capitalist system itself are not possible within the capitalist system. It is insane, really, that even people who believe that we need a new social system cannot address this side of capitalism—that at least one of the core forms of commodification is animals rendered horribly into "food."

That Marx himself had a blind spot on this question, and on the question of what I am calling "the ethical moment in politics" (which, to give a Zizekian spin to it, might be quite similar to what we could call the "political moment in economics") is no good reason to keep on with and even endorse inane statements about "loving bacon" and the like with a situation that is now many orders of magnitude worse.

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

BM: Very simply, any economic process that reinforces commodification and that reinforces the view that everything is nothing more than a mere thing in a world of things rebounds upon humanity as well. The production of commodities goes back far into human pre-history. Perhaps the earlier forms of this production were not so terrible, though they already depend on divisions of labor, and therefore social divisions, that, as Marx demonstrated in 'Capital,' are the seeds of the vast division of labor and extreme commodification that we know today. However, what makes for the actual capitalist economic and social form is the commodification of labor-power. This commodification has immense consequences, one of which I like to characterize as the moment when "all bets are off"—or, as Marx and Engels put it, "everything solid melts into air." In other words, this is the moment when the door is opened wide to the commodification of everything.

You would think this would have already happened with the commodification of animals, or the commodification of women, or the beginnings of prostitution. But every previous society had some sort of traditional or conventional set of limits, often represented in religious codes. Even capitalist societies have had to work with these limits up to a point, but perhaps it is definitive of our own era that any notion of moral limits just sounds sentimental–in the same way that a member of the G.W. Bush administration (was it the law professor who is now at Berkeley?) described any prohibition on the use of torture in interrogation as "quaint."

There is the obvious point that people are often treated as animals, first of all working people who are treated as pack-animals or what-have-you, or simply as expendable without a thought. The pre-existing basis for this treatment, however, is the deeply-ingrained assumption that animals can be treated as "animals," that is, as mere, expendable things.

I suppose a good Buddhist answer to this question, which ought to be embraced within a reconceived communist project, is that anything that deepens the commodification of anything, anything at all, brings harm to humanity, to working people, to all sentient beings, and to the fabric of all existence. Perhaps this harm is done first of all to some parts or nodes within this fabric, but it doesn't stop spreading out. Indeed, this is why they call the academic discipline "ecology and systematics," we are talking about the interconnectedness of things.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

BM: In some ways the first of these questions is just silly. (I'm not saying you're silly

to raise it, of course.) There are many obnoxious behaviors in the world that depend on individual decisions and that are not at all affected by the withdrawal of any given individual from any particular one of these behaviors. I could give many examples, though I am sure that readers of this interview know what I am talking about. And, just to be clear, this is not a matter of self-righteousness, and I will say that I am not innocent in all of this either. I just try my best, and I try to ask myself what went wrong when I know I didn't do the right thing.

To go more directly to the point, and to appeal to Kant, if I know there is something that is the right thing to do, why would the question of how many other people are doing it matter one way or another? I feel like some old Sunday-school teacher saying this, but, you know, just because everybody does it doesn't make it right and just because very few do it doesn't make it wrong. It's weird that this needs to be said.

The motivation for even raising this question, as anti-vegetarians do, is, on the one side, this hang-up about how some vegetarians seem either happy or even self-righteous about being vegetarians, and, on the other, surely some guilt that anti-vegetarians are feeling not only about what they are doing, but also the ridiculous things they present as supposed "arguments" against vegetarianism. In 'Ethical Marxism' I argued that the rabid carnivorism that is so endemic to many cultures in this world (and no less so in, say, France, than in the United States) goes so far as to warp reason, or at least the ability to reason, itself.

No doubt there are a few vegetarians who are overly self-righteous or happy about what they are doing. So what? I don't see how that affects the arguments for vegetarianism either way. And people who find vegans "annoying" or "unbearable" or whatever might ask themselves why they find this particular thing so difficult for them to deal with—after all, there is no end of annoyance (and far worse) in this world.

What is especially annoying is when these anti-vegetarian screeds come from ostensible Marxists, anarchists, or other leftists. And this isn't even so much because of the content of the claims, but rather the way it reveals a mind unable to think critically and self-critically. When I was in graduate school, as a somewhat self-righteous Marxist, there was a professor who seemed to me to be quite reactionary, and his specialization was the philosophy of William James. Now, in hindsight, I don't know that this professor was all that reactionary so much as he was, in the narrow sense, reacting to me. However, at the time, I somehow thought this was a good reason to not study William James. That was a big, stupid mistake! (Just one of many big and/or stupid mistakes I've made in life, for sure.) What might be instructive here regarding the mind of the person who is otherwise politically radical is that we all have blind spots; we all have those moments where our thinking turns out to be just as conventional as everyone else's, and where we fall into ridiculously reactive and defensive postures. (Again, if it needs to be said, I am not exempt from this, either.)

Not so long ago, in a little Facebook discussion that I allowed myself to get sucked into, someone said one of the usual things one hears, “No one is going to judge me for what I eat.” Now, perhaps there is a point here. One of the things I discuss in ‘Ethical Marxism’ is the fact that this question is so loaded for people because there is no activity more intimate than the bodily processes involved in eating. Nothing starts more as not a part of an individual, then a part of that individual in many different ways, and then not a part of that individual again in some of those ways, than the processes by which food is mixed with the individual body. So it is not surprising that one gets touchy or a bit verklimpt about all this, a bit defensive. After all, especially in daily life, is a person not entitled to at least draw a line where my body is concerned, over against your attempt to intrude?

To bring class back in (and we could run this argument through gender and race as well), in a sense Marx’s argument about “wage slavery” has to do with the disposition of bodies, the social form in which the capitalist appears to pay a fair price (according to the market) for renting bodies—bodies that are disassociated from ownership in the means of production. Just as a hypothesis, I would like to propose that people who already feel thoroughly “thingified” might feel a bit put upon to be pressed, perhaps sometimes by people they perceive to not be from the working class, to change something so fundamental about themselves.

After all, the ruling class for the far greater part are not only carnivores, they “eat up” the working class too. Indeed, they are nothing but parasites on the working people. And when some of the super-rich or “beautiful people” present themselves as vegans and animal activists, this can at the very least provoke a “what does this have to do with me” response from working people, and often something far more reactive.

I would venture, by the way, that quite often this perception of the vegetarian as not coming from the working class is incorrect. It can simply be a projection of one of the other things one hears, “I’m worried about people; I can’t get involved in these other issues.”

The thing is, a lot of what I said about how some Marxists cling to this “workerist” view of vegetarianism and the animal question more broadly is not so different from how many actual working people view Marxism and many Marxists themselves—as not really being of the working people or actually connected to their actual struggles, as being a luxury activity for the better-off classes, and so on. This might apply to anarchists even more, though I wonder if anarchists are statistically more likely to be vegetarians.

In any case, I would draw three conclusions. First, advocates for vegetarianism and for a radically reworked human relationship with animals need to address class questions and to be aware of what it means to advocate on these questions to working people. If we actually care about making a better world, as opposed to

showing ourselves as somehow "better people" because of our eating practices, we need to show in both theory and in how we communicate that these are not "elite" matters. We also need to approach in a more practical and sympathetic way the actual hurdles that working people face in both opening these questions in their own minds, their own families, and their own social strata, and in actually obtaining and preparing good vegetarian food in an affordable way. One reason I wanted to develop the analysis that I did in 'Ethical Marxism' was to show the depth and breadth of carnivorism as a system, indeed an immense system, that is a very difficult nut to crack. It is a system that is very close to the core, and in important ways it is the core, of the commodity system itself—the same system that commodifies human beings.

The second point is not so different from the first, though perhaps it is less about the theoretical tie-ins with the mode of production and commodity system. Instead, this point is on the "public relations" side of things—I don't feel very comfortable with this term, of course, and yet the fact is that there are better and worse ways of getting the message out, and the other side is working full-time with vast resources and literally thousands of years of ideological support. Not unlike patriarchy—this is something that requires further thought, even though a great deal has been done already, with an especially important moment being Carol J. Adams's 'The Sexual Politics of Meat.'

My point though, is that we have to be careful with the "judginess"—not because it isn't justified, but because it is not effective and tends to backfire. Here the comparison with patriarchy breaks down; patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, ought to be condemned outright, there should be no putting up with it. And the same with racism, with homophobia, and bigotry in general. Sure, there are different ways of coming at this too, ways that are more or less effective. And, to follow the approach taken by Sartre ("Colonialism is a system"), these things are systems too, and fundamentally we need to be about changing systems. The same with the global industrial food-animal system, we should not spare the system itself from harsh—and systematic—critique. And yet, again, when it comes to the eating practices of ordinary people functioning within this system, again, there is a question of whether we are interested in the "pleasures" of being judgmental and feeling righteous, or are we instead interested in making real change. Again, we have to be mindful of the different living situations that people have, even while maintaining the universality of the value that it is simply wrong to participate in unjustified cruelty toward sentient beings.

I'm in no position to say that a more "positive message" would lead to large results, but I do think the judgmental approach is demonstrably backfiring.

Third, however, and this is more directed toward the Marxists and other supposed champions of the working class who clearly overreact to the fact of encountering a vegetarian, to be sure these "public relations" questions should not be allowed to obscure the ethical horror that is the global industrial food-animal production

system. Indeed, there needs to be a deepening of this dimension to show that this system is a political horror as well, even a basic survival horror, for all who inhabit this planet. None of this should be obscured under some sort of "workerist" ideology or rhetoric.

All right, this is a long way around what would seem to be a simple question, this business about personal veganism being an individualistic solution. Suppose some people become vegans out of a simple desire to withdraw from at least one of the horrible ways in which the larger social system functions? Perhaps not everything is right with that that one would want, but it is hard to see what is wrong with it. It's really hard to see why this would be a reason to not do it. Again, the anti-vegetarian types ought to think a little more deeply about what they think; they are showing here.

Having been a member of a continental European philosophy program for almost twenty-five years now, I have heard many times that there is a problem of the "beautiful soul." The "problem" was framed by Hegel and some of his contemporaries—Novalis, Holderlin (significantly, it is not unrelated to the notion of "holy anorexia"), but is probably best known in texts by Nietzsche. Years ago, commenting on the fact that my partner and I are vegetarians, a colleague who is a well-known scholar of Nietzsche and Heidegger said he "was right with us, but was concerned about the problem of the beautiful soul." Now, it seems to me that there is something of the "beautiful soul" itself about this response.

In any case, I would like to understand better exactly what this problem is, what kind of problem it is, and who it is a problem for. Here is what I think I understand thus far. As a cultural phenomenon, a kind of skeptical refusal of politics, there is something like a "problem," or, better, "problematic," to use Althusser's term.

As an "individual" issue, I see this more as, at most, an annoyance, and, as I said before, not an especially big one—perhaps because, even if a person who approaches veganism primarily or even only as a form of "withdrawal" is a bit annoying about it, usually such people are tucked away from others anyway. Whatever is annoying about them to others only comes out on occasions such as a family Thanksgiving dinner or the like. Of course, the "beautiful, annoying soul" does not want to be involved in such occasions in the first place, but attends for the sake of peace with friends and family—only to be treated as a pariah and to be submitted to idiotic discourses about meat. Probably every vegetarian reading this will recognize this scene and be familiar with how our friends and relatives want to choose such an occasion to interrogate us about vegetarianism—and being upset when we either respond with an argument or a simple response to the effect that eating animals is wrong or, as I have done for some time now, the response that a dinner table where animals are being served is not a good place to have this discussion.

I suppose that the question of the beautiful soul who is reclusively tucked away is

different now in the age of the internet—some of the most "tucked away" are among the most present in this medium. But again, so what? There's obviously no end to all kinds of stuff out there. Anti-vegetarians might want to consult a psychoanalyst to determine exactly why they specifically and continually seek out this thing that annoys them.

There is probably something "Christian," and even "Protestant," going on with the beautiful soul phenomenon, something that bypasses humanity on the road to salvation. And, for sure, there are people who are doing their best just to withdraw from certain evil pathways in this world. But we might do more investigation into the kind of society that enables withdrawal as the only realistic option for some people. Badiou often points out that this withdrawal from politics (in his sense of the masses being seized by an idea) leads in a "theological and ethical" direction. I would say that, in the case of the beautiful soul, this even takes the form of some secret, hidden, "recording angel" who is marking the hermit's path of self-improvement and purification. I practice a form of Buddhism where monastic life is not stressed (and I don't know that I could practice any other kind), but I'm not in a position to say that these forms of withdrawal or hermitage do not help the world. Again, it is hard for me to see how they hurt the world or society, other than that some don't want to even hear about it on the internet. At the least, for all of us, there certainly ought to be moments to back up and reassess, or just to open our minds a bit without all the distraction of postmodern capitalist society and to let go of accumulated crap or even of things that are in some sense "true" but that are keeping us from seeing something that we need to see.

As for these "baseline" questions, the veganism/animal activism question is, I think, different from the other examples mentioned, one of these at a something of an extreme. Activist or not, it undermines and should undermine the credibility of someone who claims to "love animals" if they also eat animals. Again, I don't see the efficacy of judginess toward individuals, but I also don't see that it hurts to point out that one person's beloved cat or dog is what's for dinner in some parts of the world. Unfortunately, I don't know that such inconvenient truths have so much efficacy in this society, either, because one thing that postmodern capitalism does is to undermine a sense of universality—people are more than willing to just spin the wheel and take their chances, at least insomuch as they think about something like John Rawls's "original position" (a thought experiment where one does not know in what circumstances and with what attributes–race, gender, class, etc.—one will come into the world). In other words, they are fine with "taking their chances" in the abstract, when in the world they are in a comfortable position. Still, I don't quite understand how a person can work in a rescue shelter by day and then go home and eat an animal for dinner. I suppose it requires a kind of compartmentalization that I don't experience—generally whatever mess is going on in one part of my life spreads to every other part!

I don't see quite that kind of contradiction in something like energy and ecology activism. In general it's good, of course, to take alternative transportation. But a

good bit of the time that is either quite impractical or almost impossible–and it's no accident that things are this way. All power and respect to those working to change that. But if they have to sometimes drive or ride in a car as part of this work (or in their day jobs or whatever), I find that far more understandable than the person who stops for a Big Mac on the way to the animal shelter or whatnot.

At the same time, I think it is good if we are appreciative and encouraging every time anyone starts to move in the right direction—for example, the person who begins by not eating meat on Mondays, that sort of thing. Of course there have to be refusals, great and small, but if all of that is without affirmation, I don't think we'll change the world in the ways we need to. This isn't to say that we should be uncritical in our thinking, such that we don't see the difference between a "positive step" and a "fatal compromise" (though there really are many cases where that is a difference that is hard to see, perhaps even where the distinction is, as Derrida used to put it, undecidable, and we just have to make a leap in the dark and hope for the best), but, again, we have to do more than just say "no" to the world all the time.

Certainly, there is great positivity in saying no to the global industrial food-animal system, and to the eating of animals. But I think we can go forward a lot more by stressing compassion for sentient beings.

It might be useful to go a little further in framing something fundamental here in Buddhist terms. Everything we do in this world displaces something else, on many levels. If we live in a building—and I think most of us live in buildings of one kind or another—then something else that used to live on that land doesn't live there anymore. Perhaps this was "just" bugs and worms, but, as we understand better every day, the ecological system of at least the dry land on earth depends on bugs and worms.

You most likely know the story of Sidhartha Guatama, how he was raised in a setting where everything was pleasure and nothing indicative of pain or decay was allowed to enter his sphere of awareness. Supposedly, the first instance of death that the young Siddhartha saw was a worm being cut in half by a farmer's plow. Another version of the story has a bird flying off with a worm that has been turned up by the plow. There is no easy way to render the Sanskrit term "dukkha," and it is perhaps not the most relevant way in Buddhist thought to render it as "displacement," but this translation might be helpful in the present case. In other words, the most basic translation of the first Noble Truth, "dukkha," is "life is suffering." Many, many generations of scholars and monks have reflected on both the simplicity and complexity of "dukkha" and the idea of beginning there. To give a Badiouean twist to this idea, I would suggest that bodily life is a series of displacements (within any given body as well) where nothing can ever really "work out" to full satisfaction. Hence the need for mindfulness. We cannot avoid displacement entirely, but we can be mindful about it.

Lately, "mindfulness" has been promoted as a New-Age corporate practice, in a way

disconnected from Buddhism, which is to say disconnected from the questions of attachment, compassion, and the path of right living represented by the Eightfold Path and the Bodhisattva vows and precepts. Instead, this model of mindfulness is being taken up into the corporate and capitalist theme of "corporate sustainability." Of course there is no discourse that cannot be abused and even turned into its opposite (including, most outstandingly, discourses of Marxism, socialism, and communism). But leave it for now that this "corporate mindfulness" is not what I am getting at here.

Indeed, we need to take real mindfulness further than most Buddhists do, toward a mindfulness of systems. In Buddhism there is the idea of the "three poisons," greed, hatred, and ignorance. Sometimes these are also called the "three unwholesome roots." Now, it could be said that the "roots" of capitalism are the ever-expanding development of commodity production in general and the commodification of labor-power in particular. Which of the three unwholesome roots does commodity production fit under? It might be argued that the cruel outcomes of this commodity system, never seen in any more horrible form than in the global industrial food-animal system, come under one or all of these poisons, but even that is unclear. I suppose, up to a point, some carnivorous humans can plead ignorance, and we can see the profiteers from this system as motivated by greed, but these just don't go far enough in helping us to understand a system, and therefore they don't go far enough in helping us to overturn this system. (The focus on "greed" was one of the weaknesses of the Occupy movement as well, though on the whole I think Occupy was a great thing.) So perhaps we need a further turning of the dharma wheel, something that addresses what might be called "systemic karma" with another category of mindfulness.

There is a point to thinking further about karma here, if "karma" is properly understood not as something one wants to either "store up" in the case of "good karma," or to avoid, as in the case of "bad karma." Karma simply means "action," and the basic idea is that actions have consequences. The point is to break with the mode of simply continuing in some chain of cause and effect without being mindful of the consequences of one's actions. This goes back to the "no one is going to judge me for what I eat" question. It's not a matter of judging, at least not primarily. Meat-eating practices perpetuate themselves and are perpetuated (through great effort on many levels) through the absence and even negation of mindfulness. In Buddhism, the saying is to "live by vow rather than karma." By "vow" is meant principle. Is it simply an "individual question" or "individual solution" for a person to ask her or himself, "What am I a part of, how do my actions and practices fit into some larger scheme? And what should I do about this?" There is a point to doing some things and not doing other things after all, even if there is always more to be done.

And, as for ostensible Marxists or leftists who just sneer at principle, I don't really mean to be quite as "nice" as I might have come across as earlier, when I said what I did about "judginess." Again, this isn't really about judging, but, if anything, there is a

real problem with someone claiming to be a Marxist or leftist or anarchist and then sneering at someone who is trying to live by certain principles–especially when these are precisely the people who cannot claim simple ignorance of what is going on. Unfortunately, the dismissal of principle and the refusal to think has an all-too-rich history in leftism–and we'll never change the world in any good way if we keep on with this sort of thing.

I did want to say that there is nothing in this entire interview, and especially on this point, where I haven't been deeply influenced by my life-partner, Kathleen League. She is a vegan, utopian philosopher who has done some important work on the philosophy of Theodor Adorno and also a good deal on questions of class, and she comes from the lower part of the working class herself (and grew up below the poverty line). I don't have the patience or stomach for this most of the time myself, but Kathleen will get into debates with some of these leftist or Marxist anti-vegetarians, especially on Facebook and other social media. I'm sure it's not at all unknown to people who will read this how quickly these anti-vegetarians turn into mindless jerks–there is just something about this particular subject that brings it out of them. This is very disturbing, because these are people who are not ordinarily mindless jerks, it almost seems that the dynamic is that these leftists are frustrated at not having had much effect in the world, and so they take that frustration out on someone–and how strange it is that the people they pick as targets in this regard are vegetarians and animal activists. Stated more positively, and this goes to your last set of questions, there is much to be gained in sorting all of this out.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

BM: The question would seem to hinge on whether it is possible to have a system of food production that is both vegan and profitable for capitalists.

Now, why would the food-production system in a capitalist society become vegan? Would it be because of some sort of regulation, or some sort of (pretty much inconceivable) moment where capitalists as a set of global classes (I agree with Marx that there is no "trans-national bourgeoisie) became ethically-repulsed by the system and its horrors? Can capitalists really reach the point where they say, to paraphrase the popular song, "I would do anything for profit, but I won't do that?" We know that everything in capitalism runs in the opposite direction. Capitalists are not even constrained by what Marx called "bourgeois right;" they don't even have any reason, apart from some countervailing force, to stay within the supposed principles of their own system.

Just to press the point, we now live in a world enveloped in capitalist social relations–and yet this world contains a sector (analytically speaking; in geographical or geo-political terms, many sectors) of slavery-based production that is by all accounts larger than ever. There are more people who have been pressed into slavery now than there ever have been. And by this I do not mean the far larger sector of working people whose conditions of work are not in effect any different

from slavery.

As for regulation, from time to time there are measures taken regarding cruelty toward animals, but, as most anyone reading this will know, facilities of food-animal production are generally exempt. Even beyond the slavery (de jure or de facto) point, the "free market" will go where it goes, it is exceedingly difficult to just deal with part of it. There are global markets in heroin and cocaine, and, qua market, they aren't any different from any other markets. As such markets become articulated over space and time, they become integral to the overall market system. I'm writing this in Mexico City (where I am spending a month teaching at Universidad Iberoamericana), and there is absolutely no ignorance here whatsoever about the fact that the "drug economy" is no different from some other thing that could be called the "Mexican economy."

Just to go back to Marxist basics, it seems the only thing that can really place a constraint on capitalist profit-seeking and accumulation is the conscious activism of the people. If we somehow got to the point where this conscious activism–on a large, mass scale–included a very central concern for our fellow creatures in this world, then it doesn't seem likely that achieving a vegan capitalist society would be the horizon of this struggle. I certainly hope it wouldn't be. As for what would be the basis of such a solidarity between the people and other animals, or whether "solidarity" is really the proper term for some sort of "alliance," that comes under the purview more of the next set of questions, so I'll come back to this in a moment.

Could a vegan capitalism emerge from a breakdown of food-animal production, something on a cataclysmic level such that this system could no longer function? This is highly-speculative territory, but it is hard to imagine this sort of cataclysm being contained in such a way that it doesn't lead to a complete civilizational collapse. Economic conversion is not a strong suit of capitalism, at least in terms of the displacement and redeployment of "the workforce," but we might ask if, on a less apocalyptic level, capitalism could convert food production from animals to plants in a way similar to how it has converted from typewriters to personal computers.

There is probably no purely analytical way to say that a vegan capitalism is simply impossible, even given, as I've argued, the central role that the making of animals into commodities plays in the emergence and spread of commodity production more generally.

If a vegan capitalism were possible, should we hope for such a thing–even if most of us hope, ultimately, for a post-capitalist society? Should we work for such a thing? I suppose one could say that it is right to work for a society that does not have the present food-animal production system, regardless of what happens with capitalism. This is probably similar to the way that it is right, for instance, to work for a society that has gender equality and full reproductive rights and freedoms for women, regardless of what happens with capitalism. I tend to think that neither a

vegan food system nor the full liberation of women is possible in a capitalist framework, but I am not entirely sure how to argue this point. Furthermore, while I tend to think that true liberation involves interconnections and a kind of "comprehensive" struggle that addresses all of the root questions of exploitation, domination, and oppression, I also have no doubt that people who struggle in these "separate" spheres, for women's liberation, or for the end of racism and race domination, and so on, are on the side of the angels.

For now, though, I think I have more questions than answers on this point. I hope that I have helped to develop some of these questions, at least.

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

BM: In terms of the specific sources you cite, first of all I see some homework I need to do. At the moment, though, let me explore a few things about these two positions, as you state them.

There are two basic questions I have about these positions. First, if animals were to be considered to be "part of the proletariat," what would be the meaning of this term, "part of?" Second, what is the relationship between "revolutionary potential" and forms of exploitation and forms of commodification?

Certainly I am willing to think further on the position I set out in 'Ethical Marxism,' but I have a concern about the idea that somehow animals need to somehow be made a "part of" the proletariat in order to enter the realm of political consideration. There is very little that can be done to really cover over the endless horror that is the food-animal production system—unlike, say, capitalism itself. Many of the covers have been ripped off from capitalism, too, though generally without getting to the heart of the matter (this is the business about "greed" again). But with the food-animal system, there is very little that can be done to make it look good—that's why people, many philosophers included, are willing to make the most ridiculous claims in order to continue their participation in this system.

Rather than fold animals into the proletariat in some way, I think there is still something to be said for extending the idea, which we have from Marx, that it is the proletariat's historical task to liberate itself, and all humankind–and all sentient beings.

We can talk about the way that class works today, how we understand the proletariat and working people more generally. However, I tend to agree with Alain Badiou that the part of this analysis that is more or less sociology should not be taken as some sort of "calculus" that will show us how a radical transformation will emerge. There is no reason in principle why the animal question could not turn out

to be the leading factor in cracking the world open, as unlikely as that might seem from the standpoint of the present time.

How this might work in terms of the matrix of social classes and the possibilities for solidarity, however, is another matter. After all, it is hard enough to figure the bases of human solidarity, especially if one hopes to move beyond the narrowly-motivating factor of "interest." Having said that, a big part of my argument on the animal question in 'Ethical Marxism' was to show (or to try to show, but in the Kantian sense that "trying" counts for a lot!) that the animal question provides the outstanding example of an ethical question that cannot be assimilated to human interests. Of course we have a human interest in not undermining the ecosystem of the whole planet or even of regions, but I am talking about the vast cruelty of the food-animal system and how it would be, or should be (in the ethical sense of "should"), simply unimaginable in any society that could even be called "decent," much less "good." And I also mean the cruelty that effects the animals in this system individually, and, to be simplistic about it, this can be understood well enough on the model of what would be called "animal cruelty" when someone does it to a cat or a dog but somehow is not animal cruelty when it happens within the food-animal system.

To use this term, "cruelty," is to perhaps separate what happens to animals in the food-animal system and what happens to humans in the labor-exploitation system. Even on a "non-interest"-based argument for solidarity, such as what I try to supply in 'Ethical Marxism,' or such as what Sartre supplies in the 'Critique of Dialectical Reason' with his notion of the "group-in-fusion," I think there is a significant gap between the basis of human or "human-class" solidarity and whatever term we might use for how the "collectivity" of animals might be considered.

Perhaps we could develop a distinction between what might be called "collectivity" in the sense we see in Sartre or Badiou, for instance, and what we can call "mutuality."

I'm skirting a certain issue here, because it seems that it could lead to the kind of debate that gets very contentious very quickly, but also because it would only be worth exploring in the case that the proletariat and animals could truly combine in something that would truly be a "political formation." I take it this would be quite different from saying that any just polity would include animals, not base its food system on eating animals, would do the best it could to not displace different species of animals such that species sustainability is endangered. All of this, however, is a matter of human polity.

So, without going much further in the issue that I am skirting, I think that the animal-friendly human polity that is possible actually entails the gap that I mentioned previously, because the gap is necessary to taking the animal question as a question of justice in its own right. This is a plenty good enough reason for not collapsing the distinction between animals and humanity (or the proletariat), as

appealing as this move, toward a supposedly-larger solidarity, appears on first reading.

In practical terms today, animalists are all reformists

At the 2013 Subversive Festival in Croatia, Marxist writer Richard Seymour was asked by an interviewer whether he believed the dichotomy between revolutionaries and reformists in the context of class struggle was useful. His answer, I think, would help inform similar debates held between animalists who seek for non-humans revolutionary and reformist change, or what is also called abolitionist and welfarist change.

"Well I think the categories matter," Seymour said. "I think there is a difference between reformists and revolutionaries. But the problem is that in practical terms today, we are all reformists in terms of what we can actually do." It's my firm belief the animal movement needs a strong dose of such sobriety, and we must realistically assess the political landscape in which we find ourselves. Abolition, animal liberation, species revolution — whatever one might call it — is simply not on the table at the present moment. We can delude ourselves that this is not the case or curse our luck for being born into an era in which the possibilities of change for non-humans is, at least for the immediate future, rather limited. But ultimately this won't change anything or help animals. Like it or not, all that's possible in the present moment is reform, which in practical terms makes us all reformists, whatever we might call ourselves.

Still, Seymour believed the categories mattered to some degree. "There was an old argument made by Alasdair MacIntyre who used to be a member of the International Socialist Group, a Trotskyist group," Seymour said. "He basically said that there was a law, a little known law, known as the diminishing returns of socialism, which meant that basically under capitalism there was a pressure for everybody to act somewhat to the right of their nominal beliefs. Therefore the only people who would probably take a radical stance regarding capitalism would actually be revolutionaries. In practical terms that often turns out to be the case." If I'm interpreting Seymour correctly here, what he's saying is that in conservative periods, revolutionaries are limited to pursuing reforms and reformists generally don't take an oppositional stance at all. No doubt the same holds true for abolitionists and welfarists within the context of the animal question.

"In real terms there is very little in the way of a revolutionary agency that we could activate," Seymour said. "So therefore most of the time what we're doing is trying to advocate reforms that will strengthen the agencies that would be capable of being mobilized in the event of a revolutionary situation." In other words, there is simply no revolutionary potential in the present historical moment, whether it be for the working class or animals. So revolutionaries are limited to pursuing reforms not due to lack of commitment or incorrect theory, but because reform is all that is possible in the current era.

"I think the sociologist Goran Therborn had some insight here," Seymour said. "He pointed out that really being revolutionary or reformist for most of the working class is not a question of ideology or subjectivity. I mean that's part of it. But the most important question is the context, the circumstance. Whether they're revolutionized or not depends whether or not they're in a situation which seems to demand a revolution. And that's really the appropriate way to think about it."

I believe this point regarding the historical context being more important than ideology in revolutionizing the human masses against capitalism is crucial in relation to understanding how the human masses will be revolutionized against domestication. So the question is: how can we create a situation in which revolution for animals seems inevitable? To me, the most obvious situation which would begin to produce such anti-speciesist consciousness would be one in which in-vitro meat, or similar analogs, required less labor to produce and were gastronomically superior than the slaughtered flesh of animals.

"To me, most of the time these dichotomies are used in a sectarian and moralizing way," Seymour said, concluding his remarks on the usefulness of the categorizing revolutionaries and reformists. In a similar way, I believe equivalent dichotomies within the animal movement are unnecessarily divisive and used to prematurely shut down debate regarding strategy, given that reform, like it or not, is all that's possible at the present moment in terms of the exploitation of animals.

Ehrenreich trivialized ape-personhood campaigns

In condemning capitalist inequality, writer Barbara Ehrenreich honorary co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, trivialized efforts to extend legal rights of personhood to apes in progressive magazine The Nation. It's particularly disappointing, given the context of her article, because it's clear she should know better. Ehrenreich is perhaps best known for her 2001 book Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America.

"Many humans in this country may be similarly motivated to seek chimp status," Ehrenreich joked in the 2007 piece. "There are individuals who commit crimes in order to gain access to the free food and medical care available in a prison. How much easier and more pleasant to have oneself declared a chimp and win entry to the soft life of a zoo animal! Not only are the guards friendly, but one’s enclosure has been designed with far more psychological forethought than the average office or cubicle."

The article's tone was satirical, so it's unclear to what degree, if any, she believed animals held captive in zoos have it easy or enjoy situations preferable to human office workers. But that she might have thought this, and it's not clear from the piece, is troubling. Either way, her humor traded on speciesism to stoke class resentment, a strategy for economic justice that should be opposed by animalists.

Further, from a socialist standpoint, the jokes propagated what Marxists call 'false consciousness,' in that they directed proletarian anger away from capitalists, the genuine exploiters of the working class, and toward animals and those humans who defend them.

Not much later in the article, Ehrenreich returned to the same comedic well. Again, it's unclear to what degree she was kidding as she suggested the rightful order of society has been tipped upside down and captive animals enjoy a better quality of life than humans. "Once apes achieve these protections, American humans are going to want them too," she said. "I'm thinking food, shelter, and medical-veterinary care."

Some animalists criticize campaigns for ape personhood as anthropocentric, given they focus on those species most similar to humans. This criticism is of course true, but it ignores that change generally happens incrementally and the lowest-hanging fruit is always achieved first. Additionally, such criticism doesn't recognize the possibilities a small hole in the legal barrier dividing humans from animals might open up. These efforts deserve the support of anti-speciesists and leftists like Ehrenreich. That she didn't take a position on the issue, besides using it to make unrelated points regarding capitalist injustice, is particularly frustrating given the knowledge she demonstrates in the article.

"We share 99 percent of our genome with them, making it possible for chimps to accept human blood transfusions and kidney donations," Ehrenreich said. "Despite their vocal limitations, they communicate easily with each other and can learn human languages. They use tools and live in groups that display behavioral variations attributable to what anthropologists recognize as culture. And we may be a lot closer biologically than Darwin ever imagined. Last May, paleontologists reported evidence of inter-breeding between early humans and chimps as recently as 5 million years ago."

Continuing, Ehrenreich makes a compelling case against what could be easily mistaken as the whole of speciesism. "Of course, what makes humans especially obnoxious is our tendency to believe in our absolute superiority over all creatures," Ehrenreich said. "We alone, of all species, have come up with religions and philosophies that declare us uniquely deserving of global hegemony. Yet one by one, our 'unique' human traits have turned out to be shared: Chimpanzees have culture; dolphins make art (in the form of bubble patterns); female vampire bats share food with their friends; male baboons will die to defend their troop; rats have recently demonstrated a capability for reflection that resembles consciousness. We are animals, and they are us."

And yet despite this insight, her article as a whole lazily attempted to raise human laborers up by minimizing the exploitation of animals. It was disappointing to see from Ehrenreich, whose work I otherwise greatly respect.

Wilde discusses species and class

The socialist animalist Lawrence Wilde is an emeritus professor of political theory at Nottingham Trent University in England. Author of the article 'The Creatures Too Shall Be Free: Marx and the human/animal distinction,' Wilde has been a member of the British Labour Party since 1975. He resigned in protest of the Iraq War before resuming membership in 2010. I interviewed him over email regarding his thoughts on the intersection of class and species."Politically, I would describe myself as a socialist," Wilde said. "Intellectually, I'm a radical humanist."

Wilde argued that speciesism was used to further human class exploitation. "By 'speciesism' I take to mean the denial that other species have intrinsic value, so that they may be treated in any way that is useful for humans," Wilde said. "This attitude endorses exploitation – animals are subjected to factory farming methods to yield the cheapest meat, allegedly for the benefit of humans. The process is analogous to workers being treated without any regard for their human needs, as described at length by [Karl] Marx in chapter 10 and 15 of Capital, which comprises more than a quarter of the whole text. Ideologically, speciesism contradicts the human potential for compassion, without which alienation can never be overcome."

Asked what areas of the relationship of humans and animals in Marxism were particularly undertheorized, Wilde seemed to suggest Ted Benton's 1993 book 'Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice' filled many gaps. "Although I disagree with his conclusion that Marx was guilty of 'species imperialism,'" Wilde said. "I suggest that the English translations of Marx's work use words such as 'mere' and 'primitive' that are simply not there in the original, and that Marx's discussion of the difference between humans and other animals does not imply superiority/inferiority."

Wilde argued that, at the very least, Marxism implied some commitment to animal welfare. "Historical materialism is a theory of historical development that points to the present capitalist mode of production as being the ultimate mode of exploitation, the transcendence of which will achieve human emancipation," Wilde said. "In terms of the alienation thesis, this means that the human essence can finally be realised, but this must involve, as Marx said, the transformation of the relationship between human and non-human nature. This is why Marx, in 1844, approvingly cited Thomas Münzer's demand that 'the creatures too shall be free.' Respect for human nature requires respect for non-human nature. Of course this is subject to different interpretation; at the least it means ensuring good animal welfare."

Wilde defended the value of prefigurative veganism. "Individual ethical choices should never be dismissed because they do not directly address systemic

problems," he said. "Individual responses demand attention to the issue at hand and can have unexpected consequences, such as securing the cooperation of

supermarkets on issues such as battery farming." But Wilde saw a vegan capitalism as unlikely. "It is difficult to imagine a practice based on compassion to be compatible with one based on exploitation," he said.

Asked to weigh in on the debate between socialist animalists Jason Hribal, who argued animals are part of the working class, and Bob Torres, who argued animals are superexploited living commodities, Wilde sided with Torres. "The bigger question is whether or not animals belong to the same moral community as humans," Torres said. "As a humanist I would argue that our different capacities mean that humans alone form a moral community, but that the successful pursuit of human flourishing (eudaemonia) is possible only by fully developing the human potential for compassion. This would transform the relationship between humans and non-human animals."

Guevara defended animal space flight

In late 1957, in the midst of the Cuban revolution, the iconic revolutionary Che Guevara defended the Soviet Union's plan to launch a homeless dog found on the streets of Moscow into space, on a flight in which there was no possibility of survival. Laika, the stray in question, was being used as an involuntary test subject, to pave the way for human space travel.

She was only three years old when she died and described by Vladimir Yazdovsky, one of the scientists involved, as "quiet and charming." Just prior to launch, Yazdovsky took Laika home to play with his children in an apparent moment of sympathy. “I wanted to do something nice for her,” he said. “She had so little time left to live.”

Exactly how and when Laika died was something of a mystery for many years as Soviet publications gave conflicting accounts. "Some reports claimed she had died after about a week when the satellite's batteries lost power and could no longer circulate oxygen," according to Colin Burgess and Chris Dubbs. "Others suggested that she had been euthanized with poisoned food, poisoned gas or a poisoned injection. Later, Soviet sources hinted that Laika had died after several hours when her cabin overheated," a claim that was validated in 1993.

In Jon Lee Anderson's magnificent biography of Guevara, the author quotes from an article the Argentine revolutionary wrote in El Cubano Libre, the guerrilla newspaper, regarding Laika's planned fate. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate the full version of the piece, so Anderson's quotations of Guevara are the only ones to which I have access.

"Compassion fills our soul at the thought of the poor animal that will die gloriously to further a cause it doesn't understand," Guevara said, before attempting to link American animalists' outrage at Laika's treatment to their government's support for the murderous regime he was fighting. "But we haven't heard of any philanthropic

American society parading in front of the noble edifice asking clemency for our guajiros, and they die in good numbers, machine-gunned by the P-47 and B-26 airplanes...or riddled by the troop's competent M-Is. Or is that within the context of political convenience a Siberian dog is worth more than a thousand Cuban guajiros?"

Painting with a broad brush, Guevara seems to suggest those Americans who opposed Laika's exploitation supported their government's efforts to repress the Cuban people. I have no idea to what degree this is accurate. Guevara was presumably correct there was a large amount of political expediency involved in American animalists protesting Soviet testing, given the United States' space program was exploiting non-human subjects as well. Perhaps these activists were equally vociferous in their protest of their own government's experiments, but I doubt it. Ultimately though, none of this is relevant to the question of whether the Russians should have killed Laika to serve their interests. Guevara's defense of animal abuse seems to have rested entirely on the fallacious argument we know commonly as "two wrongs make a right," which, as we all learn as children, is not the case.

Decades later, another of the scientist's involved in Laika's killing expressed remorse for what he had done, albeit still within the speciesist framework that the experiment might have been justifiable had the Soviets gained more from it. “Work with animals is a source of suffering to all of us,” Oleg Gazenko said. "We treat them like babies who cannot speak. The more time passes, the more I’m sorry about it. We did not learn enough from the mission to justify the death of the dog.”

In search of the vegetarian Bolshevik

Numerous sources suggest vegetarianism was banned in the Soviet Union. But one must assume this wasn't immediately the case, as a prominent member of the Bolshevik Old Guard, meaning one active prior to the 1917 revolution, was a vegetarian. Whether his dietary choices were due to solidarity with non-human animals or some other reason is unfortunately not clear.

In early 1914, Vladimir Lenin wrote a letter in which he queried the recipient regarding Alexander Fyodorovich Ilyin-Zhenevsky, apparently a party member who abstained from consuming meat. "What has become of that young Bolshevik, the Witmerist, the highly-strung vegetarian, whom I saw at your place last year?" Lenin asked, with obvious condescension that could perhaps be interpreted as jocular.

According to Brian Pierce, who translated Ilyin's work 'The Bosheviks in Power: Reminiscences of the Year 1918,' Ilyin "defended his views on this subject [of vegetarianism] against Lenin's criticisms: Lenin joked that Ilyin might provoke a fresh split in the Party, forming a faction of Bolshevik vegetarians." Lenin was obviously kidding here, as Pierce notes, but it wouldn't seem to be much of a stretch to read Lenin's comments as suggesting there were other vegetarians in the

Bolshevik ranks who have simply been lost to history.

Ilyin "served Soviet Russia," according to Pierce, "in six main capacities -- as journalist, soldier, military administrator, historian, diplomat and chess-player." He died in 1941, but it's
unclear whether he perished under Joseph Stalin's purges or as a result of the Second World War. "Volume 5 of the 'Soviet Historical Encyclopedia,' published in 1964, states that he was 'subjected to illegal repression during the period of the cult of personality' -- which may or may not mean that he was actually executed. Volume 10 of the 'Large Soviet Encyclopedia,' published in 1972, says that he 'died during the siege of Leningrad,' and Botvinnik, in the book already quoted, specifies that 'he perished from a German bomb at Novaya Ladoga,'" according to Pierce.

As mentioned earlier, many sources suggest vegetarianism was eventually banned in Russia. To what degree this information is a product of Red Scare hysteria, I'm unsure. After all, such a law would presumably be impossible to enforce outside of shuttering explicitly vegetarian restaurants and organizations.

I'm curious to know when the crackdown on vegetarianism started. While I'm far from an uncritical admirer of Lenin, I suspect it began with the rise of Stalin, as this would fit a pattern of increased conservatism in Russia following Lenin's death. Homosexuality, effectively legalized under Lenin, was outlawed in the 1930s under Stalin. Similarly, abortions were legalized under Lenin, but again outlawed in the 1930s by Stalin.

Irish anarchist talks anti-speciesism

Ferdia O'Brien is a member of the Workers Solidarity Movement, an anarchist organization based in Ireland. He recently agreed to an interview with me, in which he discussed animal issues.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else? Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

Ferdia O'Brien: I'm an anarchist or libertarian socialist. I'm open to many forms of anarchism, including communism and mutualism. I joined a Trotskyist party when I was 17, but left a year later because I found it too authoritarian, reformist, and self-unaware. Then I became an anarchist and I joined the Workers Solidarity Movement at 21. I'm a new member and have had only small involvement in the anarchist left.

JH: How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left?

FO: My views regarding non-human animals have been received in the left in pretty

much the same way as outside of it: some are sympathetic, some detached, some mocking. Although veganism is over-represented in the anarchist milieu, and is quite well facilitated (vegan meals at many events etc.).

JH: Does your organization have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

FO: I don't think the WSM has an official position on non-human exploitation. I think it would be good for the WSM to at least officially condemn it, as non-human suffering inflicted by humans is the greatest source of suffering on planet Earth, and has a blatant connection to the state and capitalism. However, considering that carnists are in the majority, it's unlikely this will happen.

I think that the animal libertarian movement and the libertarian socialist movement are necessarily connected, and should work together. However, they remain divided for similar reasons to how the LGBT rights movement and the socialist movement didn't integrate for so long (the prejudice of socialist campaigners themselves).

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

FO: The idea that cruelty toward non-humans fosters cruelty toward humans is an old one. Bentham and Kant said this, among many others. Also, the concept of dehumanisation is critical to speciesism. As long as there is a zone outside 'humanity' which we deem fit for cruelty, murder, and exploitation, humans will suffer according to the same perverse psychology. Speciesism is about arbitrarily demarcating victims, so it naturally feeds into racism, misogyny, etc. However, I think this criticism is only a tiny part of the case against speciesism.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

FO: 'Personal veganism' in practice means not paying other humans to kill or torture sentient beings. Just because the problem is systemic, doesn't mean the individual isn't responsible for contributing to it, especially since murdering and being cruel to other animals is unnecessary to human survival. The fact is that we are responsible for what harm we contribute to, but it's too hard in modern society to boycott everything. That's where collective action comes in. However, my understanding of veganism is living a life which prevents as much suffering as possible, and that naturally includes fighting with others for systematic change.

But making such an argument against 'personal veganism' is making the perfect the

enemy of the good. The fact is that being a 'personal vegan' prevents a huge amount of suffering compared to, for instance, boycotting corporations which use sweatshops. Boycotting Nike doesn't necessarily help the child in the sweatshop, but not buying that chicken in a bag means that 1 less chicken is dead because of you.

Lastly, would these humans make the same argument if we were talking about humans being killed in the tens of billions, skinned alive, cramped into tiny cages, dragged from their mothers at birth, just so they could be eaten, etc? Obviously not. This is the role of speciesism.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

FO: I'm sure vegan capitalism is logically possible, but definitely not in this world. Non-radical vegans need to realise that the state and capitalism are two of the most inimical institutions for non-human animals. State subsidies artificially support meat, dairy, and leather producers, ban animal rights activists from documenting abuses, and use the police to prevent the same from directly stopping it (much like Nazi police accosted the Resistance). The profit motive is the greatest enemy of sentient life on Earth. Factory farms get larger and more hellish because capitalists want to extract more and more profit. The same inhumane logic of capital that puts human children in sweatshops puts pigs in slaughterhouses. This is why I see anarchism and veganism as one and the same, one fight against oppression.

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

FO: I don't think that considering non-humans to be part of the proletariat is particularly useful. I think it's more appropriate to think of other animals as slaves. A donkey makes no contract with a human, and receives no wages. They have no property rights of their own. I agree that it's important to note that non-humans have no potential to liberate themselves, and that we must think about them differently (much as we don't expect human children to liberate themselves). In fact, I hadn't heard the phrase 'superexploited living commodities' before, but I think it's very apt. Many non-humans are in a category of their own; their labour isn't the commodity, their flesh, skin, etc, is the commodity, and their sentience is often not even acknowledged (let alone heeded to).

Sue Coe: socialist animalist illustrator

The contemporary British artist Sue Coe, whose work and public statements strongly condemn both capitalism and animal agriculture, is by all indications a socialist animalist. If an interview with the illustrator conducted in 2005 by Elin Slavick, now only available on an obscure blog, is to be trusted, Coe was reluctant to define her class politics, leaving that to others. However, I believe it's quite safe to

say she is a socialist, in the broadest possible sense of the word, meaning one who supports public ownership of the economy, whether emerging from an anarchist, Marxist or social-democratic tradition.

A great deal of Coe's work, which is both horrifying and beautiful, focuses on the intersection of class and species politics. The cover image for her 2012 book, "Cruel: Bearing Witness to Animal Exploitation," is a case in point. It features an emaciated animal, whose recently slit throat bleeds into a bag of money held by the stereotypical vision of a capitalist wearing a top hat. Beside him are equally large piles of money and what appear to be both animal and human skulls together. In a similar illustration by Coe, entitled "Butcher to the World," a bloated businessman emerges from a mountain of animal corpses gripping sacks of cash which are dripping blood. In her piece "Animals Are the 99%," which shows a number of animals suffering human violence, Coe appropriates the slogan of the Occupy Wall Street movement to suggest humans have a similarly exploitive relationship to animals as the rich have to the poor and middle class.

According to a 1996 feature in Eye Magazine, early in her career in New York, Coe was drawn to the American Communist Party. This involvement informed her art. "Funky English punk art does not work in a tenant/landlord struggle," Coe said. "The art school mentality is not effective with people who don’t have the luxury of trying out artistic styles, of breaking up a picture. What does work is a very realistic depiction of that struggle." In the same article, Coe described capitalism as an "economic crime."

In a 1993 article in the Baltimore Sun, during a conservative era when many believed there was no alternative to the free market, Coe offered an unapologetically stark choice. "There are only two economic systems known to human beings; one is socialism and one is capitalism," Coe said. "Capitalism will destroy itself — its contradictions will destroy it. Whether it will take all human beings off the face of the earth with it — that's the question." She went on to stress the importance of communal efforts, suggesting they were innate to human nature.

"How come we've survived this long?" Coe said. "Because we cooperate. If we didn't cooperate with each other, the human race would have been dead centuries ago. In fact, and this is a peculiar thing, we're too good. That's how come we're exploited by a tiny minority of corporations who do what they want. We allow it to happen. We cooperate. That's our nature — it's not warlike."

More recently, in a 2012 interview for Bomb magazine, Coe struck a similar note regarding what she saw as the inevitability of capitalist collapse. "We now have over ten percent of people unemployed, which according to any economist—even Milton Friedman—is revolutionary conditions," Coe said. "That’s very unstable capitalism. Now capitalism, I don’t think can be fixed...But in its death throes, it’s extremely dangerous."

Marxist analysis of forced molting

From a Marxist-animalist perspective, forced molting, a practice by which egg-

laying hens' productivity is increased through starvation and reduced access to light, increases relative surplus value for animal exploiters. "Natural molting means a lot of lost production time, and the chickens never produce as many eggs afterward," according to famed animal exploitation industry consultant Temple Grandin. "Forced molting shortens the time the chickens spend replacing their feathers and gets them back into full production faster. To force-molt an egg-layer flock, farmers shorten the hen's daylight hours to six to eight and starve them for ten to fourteen days. That makes the birds molt and shortens the molting period by eight weeks, but it is very cruel. The hens' mortality rate doubles."

Within Marxism, relative surplus value is created by the lowering the amount of work dedicated to necessary labor, that needed to reproduce the exploited's livelihood, in proportion to that dedicated to surplus labor, that used to enrich the exploiter. For instance, an exploiter might create relative surplus value by reducing what constitute's their labor force's livelihood or increasing their labor force's productivity. The practice of force molting employs both of these methods to create relative surplus value for animal exploiters. Hens' necessary labor is reduced in proportion to their surplus labor by limiting what constitutes their livelihood — in this case, their access to food and light — and increasing their productivity, by artificially stimulating increased egg production.

According to Karl Marx, "all the capitalist cares for, is to reduce the labourer's individual consumption as far as possible to what is strictly necessary," thereby increasing relative surplus value. But there are limits to which the exploited's livelihood, or means of subsistence, can be reduced. "If the owner of labour-power works to-day, to-morrow he must again be able to repeat the same process in the same conditions as regards health and strength. His means of subsistence must therefore be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a labouring individual," Marx said.

In the context of forced molting, hens' means of subsistence is reduced to such low levels that many are unable to reproduce their labor power. They simply perish. "One leading breeder recommends keeping food withdrawn [during forced molting] until birds lose 30 percent of their body weight," according to animalist Erik Marcus. "Many chickens face an added horror — their cage-mates die and begin to decay in the cramped cage. The bodies are not removed until after the molting period. By the time the lights are turned back on and food restored, 5-10 percent of the chickens will be dead." For animal exploiters, the loss of the dead hens' labor power is justified by the increased generation of relative surplus value by those hens that survive.

Whether hens are subjected to forced molting in the first place, according to Marcus,

often depends on the cost of replacement hens. Obviously, as Marx

pointed out, "the labour-power withdrawn from the market by wear and tear and death, must be continually replaced by, at the very least, an equal amount of fresh labour-power." In another decision calculated to maximize surplus value, animal exploiters sometimes choose to kill their hens immediately after their birds' productivity begins to decline, rather than allowing a natural molt or imposing a forced molt, because they know fresh labor power can be acquired more cheaply in the form of younger, more efficient hens.

'Man, Controller of the Universe' is speciesist

Given the piece's title, it should come as little surprise that Diego Rivera's Marxist-inspired mural "Man, Controller of the Universe" is most likely speciesist. Among other things, but perhaps of primary concern for socialist animalists, the 1934 composition features Charles Darwin resting his hand atop a lengthy measuring stick. At his feet sit a number of animals, including a monkey barely able to reach halfway up the straightedge, even with the help of an object upon which the primate is perched. While the painting is open to interpretation, to me this section is a rather clear endorsement of the anthropocentric Great Chain of Being, unscientifically wrapped in evolutionary garb.

"The Scala Naturae [also known as the Great Chain of Being] is a philosophical view of nature attributed to Aristotle in Ancient Greece," Lori Marino explained on the Huffington Post. "According to this view, nature is arranged on a kind of ladder or hierarchy of increasing 'advancement' and value, moving up from inorganic objects like stones, at the very bottom, to plants, through the 'lower' animals such as sponges, to vertebrates such as fish, then to 'higher' animals such as mammals, then to monkeys and apes, and finally humans." As Marino demonstrated, this view is simply false.

The story behind the creation of 'Man, Controller of the Universe' is interesting. Nelson Rockefeller, the capitalist and future vice-president of the United States, commissioned Rivera to paint a mural on the ground floor of the Rockefeller Center in New York City, titled 'Man at the Crossroads.' The Mexican artist, who was married to Frida Kahlo, did this, but included a sympathetic portrait of Vladimir Lenin surrounded by a multi-racial group of workers. Rockefeller demanded the image of the Russian Marxist be excised. Rivera refused, and much to the art world's dismay, the composition was subsequently destroyed.

'Man, Controller of the Universe,' which is often mistakenly referred to as 'Man at the Crossroads,' is Rivera's recreation of the latter based on photographs of his original work.

Rivera's apparent suggestion that humanity is the pinnacle of evolution represents a misreading of Charles Darwin's work and just the kind religious-inspired

superstition the painting glorified triumph over. "Darwin's discoveries showed conclusively that there is no ladder, but that all life is instead connected through branching evolutionary relationships - known as phylogeny," Marino said. "Even though he demonstrated that there is no 'up' and 'down,' Darwin's insights were relabeled as the 'phylogenetic scale,' which continued to preserve a hierarchical system in which 'higher' organisms were more 'evolutionarily advanced' than 'lower' ones."

Given the format of Rivera's painting, one could argue, with incredible implausibility, that 'Man, Controller of the Universe' is a criticism of a reconstructed conception of the Great Chain of Being, rather than an endorsement of it. After all, Rivera's vision of regressive capitalism is pictured on the left side of the mural, while the artist's vision of progressive socialism is on the right. I'm not sure why Rivera placed Darwin in the context of the reactionary past. But that he meant the placement as criticism of anthropocentric science is laughably unlikely. More likely Darwin's location is a nod to the undeniable achievements of the capitalist era or how the naturalist's theories were used to justify cutthroat economic policies in the form of Social Darwinism.

As Marino pointed out, the Great Chain of Being, a version of which Rivera appeared to endorse, serves to ideologically justify human domination of other sentient species. "The Scala Naturae gives us license to exploit other animals because they are seen as being further down the ladder," Marino said. "It also helps us to view ourselves as not being fully part of nature, and therefore to disconnect from empathizing with other animals. It seems to give us a 'right' to treat them as commodities for our own use. Even seemingly well-intentioned ideas about stewardship and dominion are ultimately just manifestations of the same hierarchical view that leads to abuse and exploitation."

'Beasts of Burden' was influential socialist-animalist text

'Beasts of Burden' was an influential socialist-animalist pamphlet, first published in late 1999 by Antagonism Press. Its authorship remains a mystery, so far as I'm aware. The text was written using the pronoun, 'we,' but of course that does not necessarily mean the pamphlet was a collaborative project. Antagonism Press, which one must assume is no longer active, barely boasts a web presence at all.

For feedback, it requested mail be sent to a London address, in care of "BM Makhno," which one assumes is a pseudonym inspired by Russian anarchist Nestor Makhno.

The pamphlet was explicitly aimed at both socialists and animalists, in the hopes of beginning the process of unifying their respective struggles. "This is a text which, we hope, faces in two directions," the pamphlet stated. "On the one hand we hope that it will be read by people interested in animal liberation who want to consider why animal exploitation exists, as well as how. On the other hand, by those who define

themselves as anarchists or communists who either dismiss animal liberation altogether or personally sympathise with it but don't see how it relates to their broader political stance."

The pamphlet argued there was a close connection between human and animal liberation. "The development and maintenance of capitalism as a system that exploits humans is in some ways dependent upon the abuse of animals," the text stated. "Furthermore the movement that abolishes capitalism by changing the relations between humans - communism - also involves a fundamental transformation of the relations between humans and animals."

The pamphlet traced the changing historical relationship between humans and animals, and how that relationship affected each, while attempting to avoid reductionism. "We should avoid ascribing to agriculture the role of 'original sin', the singular cause of humanity's misfortunes and of our expulsion from some primitive communist Eden," the text stated. "The development of states and classes were contradictory, complex and contested processes taking place over many millennia. While the domestication of plants and animals was an important part of this story, we do not want to suggest that it was the whole story."

The pamphlet made the case that animal-exploitation industries were critical to the development of capitalism. "The historical evidence suggests that not only is capitalism dependent on ruthless primitive accumulation, but primitive accumulation relies upon the animal industry," the text stated. "Marx is clear that it was 'the rise in the price of the wool,' which made it profitable to transform 'arable land into sheep walks.' People were driven from their homes to make way for sheep."

The pamphlet argued that in practical terms there could be no such thing as vegan capitalism. "Of course it is possible to imagine a theoretical model of capitalism that does not depend on animals, but this is to confuse an abstraction with the actually existing capitalism that has emerged as a result of real historical processes," the text said. "Similarly we could imagine a capitalism without racism or women's oppression, yet both of these have played a crucial role in maintaining capital's domination and continue to exist despite superficial changes to the contrary."

The pamphlet argued that anti-speciesist thought enriched socialist theory. "Animal liberation perspectives enable us to see that if the reconciliation of humans and nature is to be more than an empty wish, concrete measures have to be taken to change the way humans relate to animals, such as dismantling the technology of factory farming," the text stated. "They also raise the question of extending the notion of community beyond humans to embrace other species - the fact that animals may not be able to participate in the community as active subjects does not mean they have to be simply objects for human use."

For the author or authors of the pamphlet, prefigurative veganism was important.

"Total abstention is more or less impossible, and to moralistically condemn others for not going far enough only limits the scope for a movement to develop," the text stated. "Nevertheless, vegetarianism/veganism is not just a matter of sanctimonious handwashing...Not eating animals brings about qualitative improvement in the well-being of animals (as well as quantitative reduction in animals killed), even if as an isolated act it can be commodified and turned into another lifestyle marketing niche."

And yet, the pamphlet conceded that while the advent of socialism would mean positive change for animals, it would not necessarily mean the overall abolition of their use. "Disagreements would continue even in the society that would emerge as the communist movement developed to a stage where capitalism was in the process of being abolished across large parts of the world," the text stated. "Communism is not the application of a universal moral code, or the creation of a uniform society, and there would be no state or similar mechanism to impose, say, veganism, even if many people thought it desirable. The question of how to live with animals might be resolved in different ways in different times and places. The animal liberation movement would form one pole of the debate."

Theorizing pets' role under capitalism

Companion animals, like other domesticated animals, are distinct from human proletarians in that they so not sell their labor power under the pretense of free choice. Rather, companion animals are themselves commodities. Their labor power is sold all at once, by others, unlike proletarians who sell their labor power in increments. Further, companion animals work toward the creation of a marketable commodities, as do other domesticated animals. While, say, cows involuntarily labor toward the production of milk, offspring, and flesh, companion animals involuntarily labor toward the reproduction of human labor power.

Richard B. Lee defined the reproduction of labor power, a Marxist concept, this way. "In a capitalist mode of production, reproduction of labor power occurs on a daily and generational basis," Lee said. "Daily reproduction of labor power involves the provision of food, clothing, rest, and emotional support for the workers, the task of restoring their depleted capacity for work, while generational reproduction of labor power involves child rearing and child care, the work involved in producing the next generation of workers."

Companion animals are involved in the daily reproduction of human labor power by helping to meet their owners' psychological and emotional needs. This forced contribution is quantifiable. Studies show that human proletarians who own pets have lower blood pressure, anxiety, and risk of depression, among other things. According to Dr. Edward Creagan, an oncologist at Mayo Clinic, "A pet is a medication without side effects that has so many benefits. I can't always explain it myself, but for years now I've seen how instances of having a pet is like an effective drug. It really does help people."

But on the whole, pet ownership certainly doesn't benefit companion animals. According to the website of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, of the 7.6 million pets who enter shelters nationwide every year, 2.7 million unwanted, healthy animals are killed. Human domestic violence figures perhaps give the best idea of pet abuse's scope. According to the Humane Society of the United States, over two million women and men are physically assaulted by an intimate partner every year, and 71 percent of victims say their abusers also targeted their companion animals. No doubt more prevalent than intentional cruelty toward pets is unintentional neglect by well-meaning owners. Even when this is not the case, companion animals' lives are inevitably dull and circumscribed, as these creatures have been reduced to near-complete dependency on their human masters.

As the socialist animalist Henry Stephens Salt said, "The injustice done to the pampered lap-dog is as conspicuous, in its way, as that done to the over-worked horse, and both spring from one and the same origin—the fixed belief that the life of a 'brute' has no 'moral purpose,' no distinctive personality worthy of due consideration and development. In a society where the lower animals were regarded as intelligent beings, and not as animated machines, it would be impossible for this incongruous absurdity to continue."

Whatever my writing here may suggest, I don't put a high premium on abstract theory. I'm sympathetic to 'Big Bill' Haywood's quip regarding the value of experiential learning, in which the Wobbly leader said, "I've never read Marx's 'Capital,' but I have the marks of capital all over me." In a similar way, I think many are able to see the marks of capital all over animals, without needing an intellectual system to explain it. But for whatever reason, some socialists don't see these marks. For them especially, I think it would be helpful to codify a Marxist animalism, if you will.

As I've mentioned in other essays, the minutiae of theory is not my strongest suit. I'm sure there are some errors here, besides the intentional subversion of classical Marxism's anthropocentrism. But I have no doubt other anti-speciesist socialists can radically expand, and, where necessary, correct, this brief sketch of companion animals' role under capitalism. I hope they will.

Was Shifu's vegetarianism motivated by anti-speciesism?

The Chinese anarcho-communist Liu Shifu, who apparently modeled his class politics after Peter Kropotkin, was a steadfast practitioner of prefigurative vegetarianism, and encouraged his followers to be the same. And while there is some indication this abstinence from animal flesh was inspired by concern for non-human welfare, the other strictures Shifu applied to his adherents suggest the diet might also have just been a quasi-spiritual regimen of self-improvement.

In his anarchist publication, The Voice of the People, Shifu wrote, "Our principles are

communism, anti-militarism, syndicalism, anti-religion, anti-family, vegetarianism, an international language, and universal harmony. We also support all the new scientific discoveries which advance man's livelihood." Shifu took his prefigurative vegetarianism incredibly seriously. As Shifu was dying from tuberculosis in 1915, his doctor implored him to eat animal flesh for the sake of his health, according to Edward S. Krebs, but Shifu refused.

"Following (Leo) Tolstoy, Shifu presented vegetarianism as essential to non-violence and good health," Krebs said of the Chinese anarchist who began his revolutionary career as a member of the China Assasination Corps. "Shifu's [eventual] rejection of assassination and other forms of violence as tactics for revolution marks a similarity with Kropotkin's career. Shifu's linkage of vegetarianism with nonviolent social revolution might reflect the more immediate influence of Tolstoy."

And yet in context with other strictures Shifu pressed upon his followers, prefigurative vegetarianism looks like it could have been merely one point in a loyalty pledge to a group more concerned with apolitical self-improvement than effecting systemic change. These points included, according to Krebs: "(1) Do not eat meat. (2) Do not drink liquor. (3) Do not smoke tobacco. (4) Do not use servants. (5) Do not ride in sedan-chairs or rickshas. (6) Do no marry. (7) Do not use a family name. (8) Do not serve as an official. (9) Do not serve as a member of a representative body. (10) Do not join a political party. (11) Do not serve in the army or navy. (12) Do not believe in religion."

While one could imagine how many of these points fit into an anarchist worldview, the strictures against alcohol and tobacco seem completely motivated by an apolitical impulse for self-improvement. It is unclear to what degree Shifu's advocacy for prefigurative vegetarianism was motivated by a similar impulse, as opposed to anti-speciesism.

His individualistic desire to represent his beliefs prefiguratively extended to his class politics. In 1913, Shifu and his followers expended quite a bit of energy attempting to launch an anarchist colony, which ultimately didn't get off the ground. Such escapist endeavors are regarded by many socialists, including me, as self-indulgent distractions from genuine class struggle. As contemporary Marxist Paul D'Amato put it, "You can't build little islands of socialism in a sea of market capitalism," and even if one could, they in no way challenge systemic problems. I would argue efforts to create islands of prefigurative vegetarianism or veganism in a sea of societal speciesism are a similar waste of time, if not doomed to fail.

Still, Shifu's influence, and that of anarchism more broadly, was wide enough in China in the early part of the 20th century that even a young Mao Zedong, who would later engineer his own brand of Stalinism, recognized Shifu by name, according to Krebs.

DxE's Kelly Atlas talks anarchism

Kelly Atlas is an organizer for Direct Action Everywhere (DxE), an animalist group which has risen to prominence by protesting inside non-vegan restaurants. An internet video of Atlas leading such an action went viral, garnering her coverage on Glenn Beck's radio show, among other outlets.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else?

Kelly Atlas: Pretty strongly socialist. I'd like us to get to a world in which we all choose to take care of one another, but until then, the underprivileged (including the nonhumans for whom we are responsible) need homes and health and safety much more than anyone willing to exploit them needs a Lexus.

I do identify as an anarchist, which to me means that I consider every individual's autonomy (insofar as autonomy is possible) to be of principal importance, with the attitude that "one person's rights stop where another's begin."

JH: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

KA: No formal involvement. My approach at present is to engage people I know in dialogue about hierarchal domination, and to endeavour with everything I do to establish collaborative, altruistic norms. We organize DxE through consensus among the (currently six) core organizers, and constantly seek input from the engaged members of our activist community, in keeping with our ideology of liberation.

JH: How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left?

KA: While anti-speciesism (or liberationism or what you will) is generally more received on the left than elsewhere, there is still an embarrassing lack of concern for human supremacism among those who stand so firmly against every form of oppression that affects humans. I believe, as Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson have written about, that the animal advocacy movement's focus to date on vegan consumerism is partially (if not significantly) responsible for this, and that's a movement norm that I hope to change as we become the animal rights movement and start acting more as allies to oppressed nonhuman animals than marketers of veganism, bigger cages, or bullhook bans.

JH: If you belong to an anti-capitalist organization, does it have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

KA: I split all my time at present between anti-speciesist advocacy and caregiving at a sanctuary for rescued animals who are in the process of rehabilitating, so I am not formally involved with any explicitly anti-capitalist organizations, though most of my co-activists share my disdain for the capitalist greed machine. To kind of reverse the question, I would definitely like to see both the animal liberation and environmentalist movements adopt more anti-capitalist positions, given the extremely negative direct and social effects of such a thoroughly greedy system on captive animals, wild animals, and our entire planet. It's definitely something I talk about in conversations with other liberationists and environmentalists.

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

KA: As I am sure many readers here understand, every manifestation of the logic of domination reinforces every other. Most obviously, the most underprivileged of humans in our society are the ones compelled into work inside slaughterhouses, in the worst conceivable conditions, physically and psychologically.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

KA: I agree with that entirely. While I am of the position that eating someone else's body is a hate crime as one can hardly degrade someone else's body further, and while I insist that refusing to eat or wear someone else's body (and to a lesser but still significant degree, their eggs or milk) can be a very powerful symbolic action (if that anti-speciesist motivation is made clear), I don't actually actively advocate for humans to engage in vegan consumer behaviour. I do not want to frame and focus the dialogue on the human oppressors, but on the nonhuman oppressed. So I try to open up space for the voices of the oppressed to reach through the physical and ideological barriers that silence them.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

KA: I mean that depends on how you define "vegan," right? If a "vegan" is just someone who doesn't use products derived from animals exploited in institutionalized exploitation camps, sure, totally doable. But I think that meaning is of little value, given that a world without slaughterhouses could still be a colonialist one, engaging in excessive consumerism that destroys the lives of non-captive animals through habitat destruction and pollution and other forms of environmental devastation.

Though I use the word infrequently now, to me "veganism" means consuming in a way that means we are doing the least amount of harm that we can given whatever

constraints are on us — as consumers. But I am sure that actively trying to build collaborative and altruistic norms, advocating for species equality, demanding an end to colonialism, and otherwise speaking out against injustice makes someone much more impactful than if they were just vegan, whatever the definition. (Let's not use that as a moral license though, especially given the social, normalizing effects of participating in speciesist behaviour — but we should have empathy for those in less wealth-privileged circumstances than ourselves, and encourage everyone to speak up for the silenced even if they are forced to participate in the speciesist system in a more direct or obvious way than ourselves.)

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

KA: I have only given this cursory thought, and would like to learn more of each position before making an assessment myself. But for now, suffice it to say that nonhumans are most definitely a class of forced labourers, and labourers who can and do resist as Hribal has written about, but I expect it is significant that their ability to politically organize is severely limited compared to that of animals who are human and speak the same tongue. I do think it is important to try to take as non-speciesist a perspective on other animals as we can so even the idea that we can consider them part of the proletariat is valuable. But if considering them part of the proletariat would imply continuing to "employ" them, then given that I do not believe they can consent to any work (and certainly not before being coercively trained into it), then that doesn't sit so well with me, but hey, I've already expressed more of a position than I have the prerogative to given that I haven't looked into either side of this debate much.

Carpenter was Fabian animalist

Edward Carpenter was a socialist and early gay-rights activist, who practiced prefigurative vegetarianism and advocated on behalf of animals. It should be said that Carpenter's brand of socialism, Fabianism, was despised by many revolutionaries of his era, such as Leon a Trotsky, who regarded it as overly reformist.

"The reformists who are fighting against a proletarian class consciousness are, in the final reckoning, a tool of the ruling class," Trotsky said in 1925. "The day that the British proletariat cleanses itself of the spiritual abomination of Fabianism, mankind, especially in Europe, will increase its stature by a head." Whether Carpenter's gradual approach was, in the final analysis, worse for the working class than Trotsky's Bolshevism, which I would argue inadvertently laid the groundwork for Stalinism, I'm unsure.

Writing in 1889, Carpenter admirably condemned capitalism and vivisection in the

same breath. In doing so, however, he seemed to take a problematically condescending view toward non-European people, and made presumptions about ancient Egyptian attitudes toward animal welfare for which I'm unsure there is any basis. "On the whole we pride ourselves (and justly I believe) on the general advance in humanity," Carpenter said. "Yet we know that to-day the merest savages can only shudder at a civilisation whose public opinion allows—as among us—the rich to wallow in their wealth, while the poor are systematically starving; and it is certain that the vivisection of animals—which on the whole is approved by our educated classes (though not by the healthier sentiment of the uneducated)—would have been stigmatised as one of the most abominable crimes by the ancient Egyptians—if, that is, they could have conceived such a practice possible at all."

It should be noted that Carpenter was not particularly strict in his prefigurative vegetarianism. Writing in 1899, he confessed, "I have yet never made any absolute rule against flesh-eating, and have as a matter of fact eaten a very little every now and then - just, as it were, to see how it tasted, or to avoid giving trouble in Philistine households, and so forth."

In his 1920 criticism of the Catholic Church, Carpenter again returned to the issues of capitalism and animal testing. "The Church," he said, "which has hardly ever spoken a generous word in favor or defence of the animals; which in modern times has supported vivisection as against the latter; Capitalism and Commercialism as against the poorer classes of mankind...such a Church can hardly claim to have established the angelic character of its mission among mankind!"

In an essay published the next year, titled 'A New Morality,' Carpenter outlined his own inclusive worldview. "Make this the basis of all teaching," Carpenter said. "Let them learn as they grow up, to regard all human beings, of whatever race or class, as ends in themselves—never to be looked upon as mere things or chattels to be made use of. Let them also learn to look upon the animals in the same light—as beings, they too, who are climbing the great ladder of creation—beings with whom also we humans have a common spirit and interest."

Ronnie Lee discusses Greens for Animal Protection

Ronnie Lee, founder of the Animal Liberation Front, has in recent years become active in the English Green Party, within which he has created an animalist subgroup, Greens for Animal Protection. He discussed the effort with me.

Jon Hochschartner: How did Greens for Animal Protection come about?

Ronnie Lee: It was something that was instigated by myself.

When I decided to get much more involved with the Green Party about three years ago, one of the first things I did was to join the party's policy-animals group, which is a discussion list for people in the party who are concerned about animal protection,

including the putting forward of better policies in that area.

I very quickly came to the conclusion that something more than this group was needed and I set up Greens for Animal Protection to try to attract more animal protectionists to the Green Party and to increase the priority given by the GP to animal protection.

Several people from the policy-animals group became involved with running GAP which soon developed a very popular social media presence and began holding stalls at Green Party conferences and vegan festivals as well as producing its own flyers for distribution at various animal protection protests.

JH: What is the range of species and class politics in Greens for Animal Protection?

RL: Six vegans and one vegetarian on our seven-strong organising committee, where most of us are abolitionist in terms of our philosophical opposition to the use of other animals by humans.

All of us on the committee would describe ourselves as being left wing, with three of us also being members of Green Left, the ecosocialist group within the party.

JH: How does Greens for Animal Protection relate to the broader English Green Party?

RL: We are recognised as a group within the party and, as such, our contact details appear in certain party publications (both printed and online) and we are given reduced rates for stalls at party conferences.

GAP produces an email newsletter for supporters which is sent out using party facilities and we have helped produce Green Party animal protection manifestos for use at elections.

We've been successful in raising the profile of animal protection within the party in other ways, including getting it inserted as a major policy area on the party's website, as well as getting a big improvement to the party's policy on the use of animals for food passed at conference.

JH: Would you recommend others attempt to form similar groups within existing leftist organizations? Why?

RL: My main recommendation re existing leftist organisations is that they, or at least their members, should join the Green Party! We really need to do something about the fragmentation of the left and form a united grouping to work towards the achievement of political power in order to truly bring about social justice within society. And, in my view, the Green Party is by far the best vehicle for such a grouping.

I always find it difficult to understand why other leftist animal protectionists would be members of a party other than the Greens. At one time this may have been because they were unaware of the strength of the Green Party's policies on social justice, but those policies have now received so much publicity that I can no longer see that being the case.

Having said that, I would, of course, like to see the formation of animal protectionist groups within other leftist organisations, not just because animal protection is a fundamentally important political issue of itself, but because anti-speciesism is very much a left-wing issue, in the same way that anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-homophobia are.

How did Wright feel about animal testing?

It's difficult to assess the species politics of Richard Wright solely based on his account of direct participation in vivisection. Near the beginning of the Great Depression, the Black writer and communist assisted in animal experimentation after being assigned by a relief agency to work in a Chicago hospital.

Wright was a member of the United States Communist Party for approximately a decade, beginning in the early 1930s, according to Annie Zirin. Among other forms of activism, in 1936 he took a job as Harlem editor of the Daily Worker, a CP publication. Wright would publicly break with the party, Megan Behrent said, "as [Joseph] Stalin's horrors became known, and as the CP, under orders from Stalinist Russia, abandoned the fight against racism in the U.S., a struggle that had won the party the support and political allegiance of the likes of Wright."

In his acclaimed autobiography, Wright described the hospital at which he was working as one of the biggest and wealthiest in Chicago. "I cleaned operating rooms, dog, rat, mice, cat and rabbit pens, and fed guinea pigs," he said. As a boy, Wright dreamed of being a medical researcher, and perhaps satiating this childhood interest, he asked questions of the vivisectors regarding the tests. His queries do not appear critical.

"I wanted to know if the dogs being treated for diabetes were getting well; if the rats and mice in whom cancer had been induced showed any signs of responding to treatment," Wright said, with seeming enthusiasm. "I wanted to know the principle that lay behind the Aschheim-Zondek tests that were made with rabbits, the Wassermann tests that were made with guinea pigs." The doctors he asked dismissed his questions in a racist manner.

Wright described his involvement in testing with cold detachment, perhaps the inevitable result of consistent exposure to such violence. "Each Saturday morning I assisted a young Jewish doctor in slitting the vocal cords of a fresh batch of dogs from the city pound," he said. "The object was to devocalize the dogs so that

their howls would not disturb the patients in the other parts of the hospital. I held each dog as the doctor injected nembutal into its veins to make it unconscious; then I held the dog's jaws open as the doctor inserted the scalpel and severed the vocal cords."

And yet this appeared to have a deep effect on Wright. "Later, when the dogs came to, they would lift their heads to the ceiling and gape in a soundless wail," he

said. "The sight became lodged in my imagination as a symbol of silent suffering." Indeed, Wright used the animals' plight as a metaphor for that of his black coworkers. Speaking of the latter, he said, "Perhaps there was in them a vague psyche pain stemming from their chronically frustrating way of life, a pain whose cause they did not know; and, like those devocalized dogs, they would whirl and snap at the air when their old pain struck them." And yet was this just a literary device? Not much later he distances his coworkers and himself from animals. "He did not regard me as a human being," Wright said of a white authority figure. "The hospital kept us four Negroes...as though we were close kin to the animals we tended." Given the frequency with which speciesism was and is used to justify vicious racism, it's more than understandable Wright felt the need to create such distance.

Later, Wright recounts a physical altercation between two of his coworkers that created chaos in the laboratory. "The steel tiers lay jumbled; the doors of the cage swung open," he said. "Rats and mice and dogs and rabbits moved over the floor in wild panic. The Wassermann guinea pigs were squealing as though judgement day had come. Here and there an animal had been crushed beneath a cage." Hoping to avoid discovery, Wright and his coworkers haphazardly threw animals into enclosures and frantically hid others' dead bodies. The anecdote is written in what seems to be a slightly comedic tone that unfortunately minimizes non-human lives and suffering. But it seems clear in this case Wright was not motivated by conscious animus toward animals. Rather, using grim humor, he sought to highlight his desperate panic, and that of his coworkers, which resulted from Black vulnerability within capitalist white supremacy.

Ultimately, more information is needed besides Wright's account of his involvement in animal testing to get an accurate sense of his species politics.

Nibert discusses intersection of species and class

David Nibert, a socialist animalist, is a professor at Wittenburg University and the author of two respected books on the intersection of human and animal exploitation and oppression. Nibert was an organizer for the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC)— a precursor to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) – when he was a university student in the late 1970s. He is currently a member of the DSA.

"It is essential for animal rights activists to recognize how capitalism promotes oppression economically, politically and ideologically," Nibert said in an email interview. "And it is equally imperative that socialists become aware that the abolition of the oppression of other animals is crucial in creating a sustainable, just

and nonviolent system of food production, which is an important step in promoting economic and social justice for all."

For Nibert, it's important one understands how the plight of animals and that of low-status humans have been interconnected through history. "For example, the expropriation of land and water resources to raise animals for food has been responsible for centuries of violence, displacement and repression throughout the world," Nibert said. "Hundreds of millions of indigenous peoples are landless and marginalized due to past land grabs by ranchers."

This practice continues into the present. "Tens of millions of hectares of land are being taken in Latin America and Africa to enable corporate agribusiness and the retail food industry to double the profitable consumption of animal products by the more affluent – again, with an increasing emphasis on 'grass-fed, organic' fare, which requires even more resources," Nibert said.

He is opposed to reformist approaches to eventual animal liberation. "When some corporations agree to increase cage sizes, this is taken as a victory for other animals, and the businesses that oppress animals for profit are given awards and endorsements," he sad. "Some advocates for other animals pursue voter initiatives to ameliorate the worst forms of oppression of other animals. However, changing economic and political circumstances can quickly lead to the nullification of such modest reforms. Indeed, Iowa congressional representative Steve King tried to attach an amendment to the 2014 federal farm bill that would have nullified such reforms in many states. Although he was unsuccessful this year, his efforts illuminate how tenuous such meek reforms actually are."

In order to demonstrate the supposed uselessness of reform, Nibert highlighted conservative rollbacks of progressive victories of generations past in anthropocentric politics. "In the past several decades we have seen many legislated reforms ostensibly to ameliorate human suffering and deprivation quashed — from the New Deal-era policies of establishing a progressive income tax and rights for organized labor to the recent attack on voting rights for people of color," he said. "Statutory reforms relating to the treatment of other animals are unlikely to fare any better. In the end, the gradualist, reform-based approach to social justice largely serves ideological and diversionary functions for an expanding capitalist system."

For Nibert, reforms aren't just useless, they're actually detrimental to progressive struggle. "What is more, such tepid, 'humane' reforms actually make the public feel comfortable eating products derived from the oppression of other animals and are thus counter-productive," he said. "To really promote justice for other animals, their

human advocates should promote a global transition to a plant-based diet and

stop wasting energy on creating reforms and the quixotic efforts to see that they are enforced."

It should be mentioned the organization to which Nibert belongs, the DSA, supports tactical reformism. As the group's website states, "Reforms we win now—raising the minimum wage, securing a national health plan, and demanding passage of right-to-strike legislation—can bring us closer to socialism." One wonders if Nibert genuinely cannot see the value of such measures. Karl Marx reportedly made his famous quip, "All I know is that I am not a Marxist," in response to the devaluation of reform by his French acolytes. He dismissed their arguments as "revolutionary phrase-mongering."

Using language apparently inspired by the work of Gary Francione, Nibert upheld the prioritization of individual consumer choices. "Being vegan and promoting the abolition of all forms of oppression of other animals should be the baseline for all animal activists," Nibert said. Pressed as to whether he applied such a prefigurative standard to environmentalists and socialists, he suggested he did not do so. "Eating other animals is not the moral equivalent of getting into an automobile," Nibert said. "Indeed, it is difficult to function in the United States by staying out of automobiles. However, use of – and support for – hybrid and electric vehicles, and using public transportation when possible, is responsible behavior. People opposed to sweatshops may indeed prefer to refrain from buying products from Nike and similar brands and shop for fair trade and union-made shoes and clothing."

Nibert seemed to suggest that veganism was necessary to feed the global human population. "While more than a billion people on the earth are currently hungry and malnourished, over 70 percent of the earth's agricultural land is used for the creation of animal products," he said. "As the human population races to more than ten billion, and as climate change advances, a transition to a plant-based diet is essential in order to feed an increasingly hungry and thirsty world." Questioned whether he thought dire poverty was a result of scarcity, rather than an unequal distribution of wealth, as socialists traditionally argue, Nibert appeared to backtrack. "The fact that so much of the world's agricultural land is in the hands of the Animal Industrial Complex leads to food scarcity," he said.

Asked to weigh in on the debate between Jason Hribal, who sees animals as part of the proletariat, and Bob Torres, who views domesticated non-humans as superexploited living commodities, Nibert was noncommittal. "I can see some truth in both positions," he said. "Other animals have been exploited as laborers for centuries, while also being treated objectified and treated as property."

Lucy Robins Lang and the St. Helena Vegetarian Cafe

Shortly after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, the anarchist Lucy Robins Lang

and her husband began the process of opening a vegetarian restaurant that would become a hub for socialists of different stripes in the city by the bay. In another example of the pitfalls of the anti-speciesist left establishing a political identity based around lifestyle choices, there is no evidence I'm aware of that the couple's vegetarianism had anything to do with non-human solidarity.

After arriving in San Francisco, the pair became friends with a vegetarian who introduced them to other practitioners in the Bay Area. Among these "was Darling the Nature Man, who refused to not only eat flesh but also to wear garments made out of animal matter," Lang said. "Winter and summer he lived in the hills on the outskirts of San Francisco, wearing only a strip of linen around his loins." One wonders if this is exaggeration on Lang's part, prefigurative politics taken to extremes, mental illness, or some combination of these.

Another local vegetarian who they met was the famed novelist and socialist Jack London. "London not only converted us to vegetarianism but persuaded us to establish a vegetarian restaurant," Lang said. According to her, the writer encouraged them, arguing, "You'll do all right...People are always taking up new ideas, and the only vegetarian restaurant in town was burned down." But London's vegetarianism, whatever motivated it, was short lived. By the time the couple opened their restaurant, the novelist "had abandoned vegetarianism and was living on raw meat," Lang said.

Lang and her husband named their restaurant the St. Helena Vegetarian Cafe after the St. Helena Sanitarium where Lang had received lessons in vegetarian cooking. "We rented part of a big shack on Market Street, papered the inside with a warm, red-flower pattern, and hung up racks of newspapers and magazines in imitation of the European cafés," Lang said. "While gangs of fishermen, dock workers, longshoremen, stokers, and sailors thronged the bars and brothels of the waterfront, we of the radical tribe sat over our chaste dishes on crisp linen, discussing the revolutionary parties of all the European nations."

It should be mentioned that, at least in retrospect, Lang was very much aware of her group's disconnect from the working class, jokingly referring to the restaurant as an "ivory tower." Still it was a hub for Bay Area socialists. "Our restaurant was one of two centers for the radicals of San Francisco," Lang said. "The other was the Liberty Book Store, which was operated by Alexander Horr and William McDevitt, the former an anarchist single taxer, the latter a Marxian Social Democrat. The Liberty Book Store carried only the literature of social protest, and the proprietors would argue hotly with any customer who was indiscreet enough as

to ask for a novel."

According to Richard Steven Street, "Many of the first California Wobblies could be found frequenting such hangouts as the big shack on Market Street known as the St. Helena Vegetarian Cafe, haunted by IWW member Edward Morgan, 'a dreary apostle

of pure reason,' who liked to harangue people as they arrived for lunch." The cafe burnt down on November 17, 1909, not long after it was built. According to the San Francisco Call, the fire resulted from "defective wiring on the rear of the building."

Lang's vegetarianism did not last either. In her memoir, she recounts eating flesh "heartily" later in life. One must assume some prototypical socialist animalists walked through the doors of the St. Helena Vegetarian Cafe, but unfortunately their passing does not seem to have been recorded, so far as I can tell.

ISO member describes her progressive species politics

Judy Heithmar, a member of the International Socialist Organization, based in the United States, recently agreed to an interview in which she described her progressive views toward non-human animals.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else?

Judy Heithmar: I am a revolutionary Marxist, which means that through bottom-up, grassroots organizing, I fight for a world free of exploitation, where the world's resources meet human need and working people control society democratically.

Hochschartner: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

Heithmar: I have been an organized socialist for about seven years and a member of the ISO for three. I became radicalized around capital punishment and queer issues. I became involved in the Campaign to End the Death Penalty in 2007, and in 2008 I expanded my organizing to include queer struggle and started to slowly identify as a socialist. My politics as a Marxist solidified between 2008-2009, and I joined the ISO in 2011.

Hochschartner: How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left? Does your organization have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

Heithmar: Many members of my organization believe that because non-human animals are incapable of liberating themselves, it is not a battle in which we should be engaged. There are a small group of us who believe otherwise, but we have been met with fairly strong opposition. The organization does not have an official position on animal exploitation and this is definitely something I would like to change. I believe that it is needed to tackle this issue first from a historical materialist perspective. Many members in the organization are simply unaware of the historical context between animal and human exploitation. To begin to win over

the minds of comrades, a starting point would be here, through teach-ins, reading groups, etc.

Hochschartner: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

Heithmar: Yes, absolutely. The exploitation of non-human animals, from the beginning of agriculture to factory farms today, definitely furthers human class exploitation. For example, a large majority of factory farm workers are of color, including migrant workers from Mexico and Latin America, some of whom are undocumented. They are extremely underpaid and are also at a heightened risk for numerous health-related problems, through repetitive exposure to toxic gases and stress injuries.

Hochschartner: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

Heithmar: I believe that veganism is an example of a response to an oppressive dominant practice in society. Do I think that veganism will inevitably lead to the liberation of animals? No. The liberation of any oppressed group will only be won with the overthrow of capitalism as well. However, I think that it's absurd to insist that vegans cannot also be opposed to capitalism. Personally, I am a vegan for health-related reasons, not because I believe that it's the way to animal liberation. However, being a proud vegan has allowed me to interact with other animal liberation activists and interject a Marxist analysis into their organizing. It certainly provides an avenue for some great political debate around the topic.

Hochschartner: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

Heithmar: Yes. Veganism is very marketable, as we have seen with the recent upsurge in green-washing. So long as the bosses can turn a profit off of it, they'll push for it. Vegan lifestyle has become more and more popular over the years because businesses have learned that they can make an obscene amount of wealth selling products that are vegan and organic.

Hochschartner: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

Heithmar: Unfortunately, I have not read Hribal's argument, but I would probably agree that non-human animals should be considered part of the proletariat. In the sense that there are actually far more commonalities between humans and non-

human workers, not only in terms of exploitation but also resistance. With regard to revolutionary potential, there are documented instances of non-human animals resisting oppression through means of strikes and other forms of withholding labor, which is certainly part of the revolutionary process. I would, however, like to read Hribal's argument and make a more educated comment in the future.

Hochschartner: British socialist Richard Seymour has said the relationship between animals and humans in Marxism is under theorized. Do you agree? If so, what areas are particularly lacking?

Heithmar: Yes, definitely. I don't think that the topic of animal oppression or animal liberation has been fully taken up by Marxism. I would like to unfold more this idea of animals being included in the proletariat. I think it would also be helpful to develop a stronger historical analysis of the human and non-human relationship, and it's nature to class-exploitation.

Animalists should unite

In an interview at the 2013 Subversive Festival in Croatia, Marxist writer Richard Seymour alluded to what he described as a 1960s slogan, regarding the realities of movement building, which would be helpful for animalists. The saying appears to have originated from Civil Rights activist Bernice Johnson Reagon, who argued, "If you're in a coalition and you're comfortable, you know it's not a broad enough coalition." I'm unsure of the context in which Reagon spoke, but within the animalist movement, I'd argue we must put aside our ideological and strategic differences as much as possible to achieve genuine change for non- humans.

To me, the benefit of prioritizing unity was the greatest lesson of the Occupy Wall Street movement. What gave that all-too-brief struggle in 2011 its power? It wasn't the movement's analysis of capitalism, which was largely reformist. While one could find anarchists, Marxists and social democrats at the encampments, in my experience they were overwhelmingly outnumbered by disaffected liberals. One could even find deeply-confused Ron Paul supporters! The movement's phraseology, contrasting the "one percent" and "the 99 percent," suggested reform. After all, while the capitalist class is a small minority, one must assume those who own the means of production make up more than one percent of the population. No doubt there are a dozen socialist sects in the country that have a more progressive analysis of the economy. But in political terms, these groups are completely irrelevant. What gave the Occupy movement its power was the large number of people involved. And that's it.

To create change, animalists must create a similarly broad coalition. And for many of us, that's going to be uncomfortable. Simply within the revolutionary pole of the anti-speciesist movement, it means pacifists should work with militants. Tactical reformers should work with abolitionists inspired by the work of Gary Francione. And those who prioritize prefigurative veganism should work with those who do

not. Outside of this revolutionary pole, which one must assume would represent a minority position within a broader coalition, revolutionaries should work with reformists. We have so much unexplored ideological common ground with those who are critical of animal exploitation but might not yet want to get rid of it altogether. In fact, if the Occupy movement is any indication, proximity between revolutionaries and reformists can give revolutionaries a greater sense of the importance of short-term goals and be a radicalizing experience for reformists.

Of course this is not to say that within such a coalition we shouldn't debate those whose species politics are to the right of ours. On the contrary, we should constantly be attempting to pull our reformist allies toward a more progressive position on animal exploitation. But our criticism should be comradely, so much as possible. Within reason, we should be a loyal opposition, because we recognize that small sects, however correct their positions may be, are ineffectual. Our guiding strategy should be to make our coalition as numerically large as possible while retaining its progressive character.

West advocated animal-exploitation reform

Cornel West, the public intellectual and honorary chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, has advocated incredibly mild reform of animal exploitation in the past, which one hopes he sees as a short-term demand rather than an end goal. He is perhaps best known for his 1994 book 'Race Matters.'

In late 2003, West wrote to the parent company of the KFC, the fast-food giant, regarding animal abuse. "I am disappointed to learn from my friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that KFC has refused to take steps to eliminate some of the most egregious cruelty to chickens in the industry," West said. "PETA informs me that members of KFC's own animal-welfare advisory panel have approved a list of simple guidelines for animal welfare that would eliminate some of the worst abuses that these animals suffer, yet KFC higher-ups have refused to implement them."

In his letter, West seemed to have all of the information needed to draw revolutionary conclusions regarded animal exploitation. "Although most people don't know chickens as well as they know cats and dogs, chickens are interesting

individuals with personalities and interests every bit as developed as the dogs and cats with whom many of us share our lives," he said. "And of course, they feel pain just like we do."

It's unclear if the demand he made of the corporation was intended as a stepping stone to greater change or an ultimate goal. One hopes it's the former. "As a person who is concerned about all injustices," West said, "I am asking you to direct KFC's suppliers to stop breeding and drugging animals so that they collapse under their own weight or die from heart failure and to phase in humane gas killing, a method of

slaughter that protects birds from broken bones and wings, electric shocks, and even drowning in scalding-hot tanks of water."

Perhaps shining further light on West's species politics, West responded to a question regarding the validity of human uniqueness in an undated video posted to the Dropping Knowledge website.

"I think there is, for me, no doubt that the life of a human being does have more value than a life of an amoeba. I believe that the life of my mother has much, much, much more value than the life of a fly," West said. "That does not mean that we are justified in crushing other sentient creatures. It does not mean that we are justified in systematically exploiting the mammals and animals...The question is how to become ecumenical, to support as many life forms as possible without losing sight of the dignity of human beings."

West's apparent belief in some sort of religious-inspired notion of dignity exclusive to humans, while problematic, is not necessarily antithetical to the animalist project. One could conceivably assert such human uniqueness while also recognizing that animal exploitation is harmful and unnecessary.

Continuing, however, West seemed to suggest a false dichotomy between working on behalf of humans and working on behalf of animals, as if one couldn't do both or as if lifting humans from dire poverty required animal exploitation. The latter view, of course, would be based on a regressive perspective that poverty is caused by scarcity, which could be alleviated by the use of non-humans, rather than unequal distribution of wealth. "When there are so many fellow human beings, one billion living on $1 a day, two billion living on $2 a day, we cannot downplay their plight even as we support other life forms and attempt to protect other life forms, be they whales, be they penguins, be they dogs, or cats," West said. Strangely, none of the species he mentions are those humanity exploits on a comparatively broad scale, aside from companion animals, whose exploitation is generally gentler than that afforded, say, farmed animals.

There's nothing revolutionary about meat-eating

In late 2000, professors Teresa L. Ebert and Ma'sud Zavarzadeh wrote an unbelievably silly commentary for the Los Angeles Times called "Our American Diet Divides Us Into Classes of Workers and Bosses," that one hopes was intended as satire. As absurd as the article is, I fear that it's condescending workerism, by which I mean a perspective that glorifies a crude caricature of blue- collar culture, is representative of the view held by most of the socialist left in regard to the consumption of animal flesh.

"The politics of the Atkins and Ornish diets has proved to be so divisive that Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, in an almost Hegelian scenario of the relation between the state and civil society, has suggested that government researchers

should do an impartial study of the two, thereby putting an end to the civil strife," Ebert and Zavarzadeh said of the competing flesh and plant-based diets. "Like everything else in social life, diets are determined not by what people desire but by the conditions of their class. This is quite an un-American thing to say, but people eat class and not food; food preferences are shaped by what one can afford to choose."

Interestingly, the pair made reference, seemingly without awareness, to an obvious objection to their argument. "By class, we do not mean lifestyle, where one shops, what accent one has or what car one drives," Ebert and Zavarzadeh said. "These are signs of cultural prestige. They belong to social semiotics and not class. Class depends on people's position in the social relations of production: Do they buy other people's labor and make a profit from it? Or do they sell their own labor in order to live?"

As the duo correctly states, from a socialist perspective, class identity is not determined by one's accent or car. It's not even based on income. For Marxists, class is solely determined by one's relation to the means of production. That Ebert and Zavarzadeh, having said this, would go on to seemingly argue consuming dead animals is inherently proletarian appears like an obvious contradiction. But of course this is exactly what they do.

"The Atkins diet is a proletarian diet: meat, eggs and other high-protein sources along with usually forbidden fats, especially butter and cream," Ebert and Zavarzadeh said. "This is 'real food,' according to Atkins, not upper-class 'invented, fake food.' In his recent New Yorker piece 'On Impact,' about recovering from a serious injury, Stephen King highlights the class culture of meat, writing that he and his wife 'came from similar working-class backgrounds; we both ate meat.' Meat is the food of the working people; a food of necessity for the class that relies on the raw energy of its body for subsistence."

The pair contrasted the Atkins diet with the plant-based Ornish plan, which they look on unfavorably. One could accept some of their points regarding inconvenience if they were aimed solely at prefigurative plant-based diets, rather than vegetarianism or veganism in general. But their writing suggests no such distinction. "The low-fat, vegetarian Ornish diet, in contrast, is a diet for those with the time and leisure to play and experiment," Ebert and Zavarzadeh said. "It entails extensive lifestyle changes. Eating becomes a full-time leisure activity, requiring frequent 'grazing' because with the low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet, according to internist Dean Ornish, 'you get hungry sooner [and] feel full faster.' Eating becomes a gaze into one's soul: a meditation, a Zen moment in which a single bite becomes 'exquisitely satisfying.' It is an extended Proustian moment."

The duo concluded by reiterating their workerism regarding the essential connection between proletarianism and the consumption of corpses. "In spite of their innumerable surface variations, all diets repeat the two fundamental divisions

of society into the classes of workers and owners," Ebert and Zavarzadeh said. "In eating food, we eat our class." Again, one hopes this piece was intended as satire. Sadly, I suspect that, while writing to some degree with tongue-in-cheek, they meant what they said.

Socialist candidate for state rep talks species politics

Travis Dicken, a member of Socialist Party USA and the Industrial Workers of the World, is running in the 2016 election for state representative in Pennsylvania's 59th district. He recently agreed to an interview in which he discussed why animalists should vote for him.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else?

Travis Dicken: I'm a socialist first and foremost. Being that I believe in being pragmatic, I think that the working class of the USA needs to take gradual steps at the moment to begin strengthening itself to take over our economy and fully control our communities, which means that raising the minimum wage, and establishing things like a single payer healthcare system, paid maternity and paternity leave, and paid sick leave for all workers are all among my primary concerns. I feel that those measures, combined with a drastically improved educational system, will put the working class of the USA in position to begin the work of taking over from the bourgeoisie. I also believe that the power of federal, state, and local governments could be effectively used to encourage the growth of co-operative and worker owned enterprise, which will be essential building blocks towards the establishment of socialism.

JH: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with the organized socialist or anarchist left?

TD: I've been a member of the Socialist Party USA for just under two years. In that time, I've become a staff writer for The Socialist, their online publication, and have published about ten articles so far on topics ranging from police violence, to the Affordable Care Act, to how capitalism has exacerbated my own problems with manic depression. I'm also part of the party's Ecosocialism commission, and had a small role in the online promotion of Mimi Soltysik's campaign for state legislature in California.

I also recently become a member of the Industrial Workers of the World after attending a May Day celebration put on by the Pittsburgh General Membership Branch. Being that I only recently joined in September, though, I haven't as of yet had the time or opportunity to contribute much to the One Big Union, although I think that their idea of Industrial Unionism will be as essential to the development of socialism around the world as both direct and electoral action will be.

JH: Why should those concerned by the treatment of animals vote for you?

TD: Those so concerned should vote for me because I recognize the intersection of animal rights issues with those of poverty and environmentalism. The 59th district is mostly rural, and many parts of it are still recovering from the beating that Western Pennsylvania took when the steel industry decided to pick up and move. As such, choices in diet and lifestyle are incredibly limited for most residents, being that they lack access to the diverse options inherent in most cities and the economic ability to make certain choices. I also believe that a well educated and financially stable populace will be more receptive to messages that may not directly impact them, such as the ethical treat of both wild and domestic animals.

I would also hope to have your vote due to my positions on our environment here. Resource extraction through hydraulic fracturing has taken over southwest Pennsylvania, to the point where we currently have 247 such platforms in Westmoreland County alone. The effects of this reckless destruction of our environment are already being felt, as evidenced by a Truthout article published several months ago that cited contaminated well water in Donegal, which is within walking distance of my house, as well as articles published in both local and national newspapers of contaminated streams, ponds, and lakes all across the area. If left unchecked, as both Republicans and Democrats in the area would like to see, the consequences on our environment will be dire, and it is my hope to take a firm stand against these practices if elected.

I also am aware of the fact that we need to foster better communication on the left in general, and on the issue of animal rights and animal treatment in particular, and am always willing to lend any platform I have to the expression of well-articulated ideas on the subject and to encourage healthy interaction and debate between all elements of the left.

JH: What public policy proposals, that you could put into place if elected, do you support that would better the treatment of animals?

TD: First and foremost, I would want to use the power of the state to empower communities to ban “fracking” and other forms of resources extraction. This has already been attempted in several Pennsylvania towns, resulting in litigation, and I think they would benefit from having the power of the state at their back instead of in their way. I would also support a publicly funded, state wide veterinary program to both provide for the health of domesticated animals and to combat the spread of lyme disease, which studies have shown has the potential to become an even more serious problem in our communities due to climate change.

Although it isn’t a policy measure, I would also support most if not all forms of direct action regarding the protection of animal rights.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the fights for economic justice and better treatment for animals intertwined?

TD: In many ways. For one thing, the oncoming climate catastrophe that is going to kill off millions, if not billions, of wild animals is also going to disproportionately effect poor, disenfranchised, and/or distant and poorly represented communities. Many of the small, rural communities within the 59th district will be so effected.

Also, I think that if we build a new economic order, it will greatly benefit the struggle for animal rights, as well as many other struggles that may not directly effect a majority of workers. Speaking from experience, when you are poor, it's hard to think beyond your most immediate needs. When you are getting the heat shut off in the middle of winter and choosing between food, getting to work, or paying the rent, you don't have the mental and emotional energy to devote to understanding the struggles of others, and although that is unfortunate I think that anyone who has experienced it will understand it immediately. When you are broke, isolated, and live in a community with very few choices already, it becomes a matter of survival to eat unhealthy, unethical food, for one example, because it is usually both all that is available and all that you can afford.

Stalinist collectivization sparked massive animal slaughter

Rapid and violent collectivization of farming in the Soviet Union during the Stalin era triggered the slaughter of domesticated animals on an incomprehensible scale from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s. While many of these non-humans would presumably have been killed regardless, their lives were undoubtedly cut shorter than they might have been.

"Peasants protested the injustice of a 'socialization' they viewed as plunder by selling or slaughtering their animals and other properties in an attempt to preserve something of their hard-earned work in the form of cash after sales, to store up a supply of food for the likely hungry times impending, or, if nothing else, to deny Soviet power the fruits of their labor," Lynne Viola said. "Peasant razbazarivanie [squandering] of livestock was of such massive and destructive scale as to directly shape state policy in the short term and cripple the potential of socialized agriculture in the long term."

According to figures provided by Viola, in 1929 there were 34 million horses in the Soviet Union. In 1933, there were a mere 16.6 million, which represents a more than 50-percent population drop. Similarly, in 1928 there were 70.5 million cattle and by 1933 there were only 34.5 million. Again, this is a more than 50-percent fall. In 1928 there were 26 million pigs. By 1932, there were a mere 11.6 million, which is another drop of over 50 percent. Finally, in 1928 there were 146.7 million sheep and goats. In 1933, this number had shrank to 50.2 million, which means the population had been reduced by more than 65 percent.

Writing of this failed period of collectivization, the exiled Bolshevik Leon Trotsky observed, in a supreme understatement, "The most devastating hurricane hit the animal kingdom." But Trotsky did not fault collectivization in general for this outcome. "The blame for these sacrifices lies not upon collectivization, but upon the blind, violent, gambling methods with which it was carried through," he said. "Having in its hands both the power and the industries, the bureaucracy could have regulated the process without carrying the nation to the edge of disaster. They could have, and should have, adopted tempos better corresponding to the material and moral resources of the country."

Socialization efforts were not helped by the gossip which spread through the countryside."There was much confusion among officials and peasants about what collectivization really meant and wild rumors held that it heralded the Antichrist, Apocalypse, a return to serfdom, a sharing of women, and foreign invasion," Mary E. A. Buckley said.

Viola quoted a few peasants who gave a sense of the mood among their class at the time. "It's all the same—soon everything we own will be socialized. It's better now to slaughter and sell the livestock than to let it remain," said one. Another peasant, whose motivation was more explicit, said, "We will not enter the collective because [we] know our property will be used by the poor. Better that we, in an organized way, destroy our horses, burn our property, than to give it to those sluggards."

Philly Socialist Kreider discusses species politics

Aaron Kreider is a branch leader of Philly Socialists, a non-sectarian socialist group which some leftists disillusioned with the sect form see as a potentially more useful organizational model. Kreider recently agreed to an interview in which he discussed animalist politics.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else? Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

Aaron Kreider: I'm between anarchism and socialism. I'm a critic of every single so-called socialist government that exists (from the Soviet Union and former Eastern Europe bloc to Cuba, North Korea, Maoist China, Venezuela, and others) for generally abusing people's human rights and failing to carry through with socialist theory. On the other hand, I also believe in organization and having leadership that is responsible to its members. I also believe in nonviolence as the most effective means to achieve socialism/anarchism.

I'm currently a member of the Philly Socialists and part of the four-person leadership "organizing committee" that facilitates and leads a lot of the work of the West Philly branch.

In grad school (at Notre Dame), in 1999 I started the Progressive Student Alliance a relatively broad organization that included anarchists, socialists, and liberals. There wasn't a significant constituency that would support a socialist or anarchist organization, and it made more sense to radicalize liberals and moderates. Having a broad ideological base has probably helped keep the organization running to this day.

From 1997 through 2007 or so, I was involved in the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) — not explicitly anti-capitalist, but we had organizational principles and most of the main organizers that were very radical (like our commitment to fight militarism). I revised the SEAC Organizing Guide and kept the computers, website and database running.

In 2002, I founded CampusActivism.org — a general resource for student and non-student activists. It includes a large collection of anti-capitalist resources and the calendar includes many anti-capitalist events.

I was involved in Occupy Philly (not hard-core, but I helped out with a couple small things). I was a member of the Education and Training working group which was predominantly anarchist. We organized a series of talks on capitalism after Occupy Philly had ended.

I currently work for Energy Justice Network – a small national radical environmental organization that helps community groups fight power plants and waste facilities. We have founded and currently facilitate the national Anti-Biomass Incineration Network. Many environmental groups ignore the harm that biomass incinerators cause to humans, ecosystems, animals, and their contribution to global warming. If you want to help animals, then stopping a biomass incinerator is one of the most effective things you can do.

JH: How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left?

AK: In SEAC, people were generally very sympathetic because we were an environmental organization (so almost all of our food at events were all vegan, or at least vegetarian). In groups like the Philly Socialists we generally ignore environmental issues and don't have any position on the environmental impact of meat consumption, or the suffering of the animals.

JH: Is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

AK: The Philly Socialists is a broad organization. It's likely that the best way to help the environment and animals is to not draw a strict line on animal exploitation. People react better to positive messages. So it's likely that we'll be more effective in building up our organization and me cooking good vegan food – then to attack

people because of what they eat. A strong organization can do more for animals and the environment with, for instance, a better public transit program that would reduce the use of cars, than we could by changing several diets.

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

AK: I wrote this leaflet in 2002 which argues that all forms of domination are connected. Now that I'm a bit older, I think there is probably a connection but I'd like to see someone do quantitative research that would test this theory. I have seen a number of examples of socialist and anarchist white men downplaying other forms of oppression to emphasize the importance of class. Is downplaying race, gender, and sexual orientation correlated with a meat eating diet and a lack of concern for the environment?

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

AK: It's a challenge to balance your personal beliefs with your practice. Nobody is perfect. We want to move people towards a more just world, while not shutting doors on people who are trying. Institutional change is the most important thing, but if your practice doesn't at least partially resonate with your beliefs then it will be hard for you to be an effective organizer as no one will trust you.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

AK: Vegan capitalism is completely possible. Capitalism is very flexible and able to turn enemies into allies. For instance, I wouldn't be surprised if the Republicans fully embrace LGBT rights within the next twenty years. In my limited experience, socialism seems to lead to veganism much more than veganism leads to socialism (somebody should do a study!).

JH: British socialist Richard Seymour has said the relationship between animals and humans in Marxism is under theorized. Do you agree? If so, what areas are particularly lacking?

AK: I think Marxism is over theorized.

Spira was socialist anti-speciesist

Many socialists and anti-speciesists might not be aware, but one of the most celebrated animalists in recent memory was a veteran of the Trotskyist movement. According to Peter Singer, in twenty years, Henry Spira did "more to reduce animal

suffering than anything done in the previous fifty years by vastly larger organizations with millions of dollars at their disposal."

Spira's involvement in socialist politics apparently began in his adolescence. "Henry went with his friends to classes on socialism organized by Trotskyists," Singer said. "He began reading [Leon] Trotsky and V.I. Lenin, as well as the early Russian Marxist, G.V. Plekhanonv." His views began to change, and among other

things, he stopped observing Jewish religious law. "He began to see injustice not as a matter of the greed or sadism of particular individuals, but as something more systemic," Singer said. "He became a socialist, sharing Trotsky's view that Stalin had derailed the idea of a real socialist revolution."

Spira soon became a supporter of the United States' Socialist Workers Party, for which he would be blacklisted and subjected to government surveillance in the 1950s. Spira covered labor struggles and the Civil Rights Movement for the SWP's newspaper 'The Militant.' He wrote for other socialist publications about the Cuban revolution, which he witnessed firsthand. Later, he would take part in reform efforts within the National Maritime Union.

Spira would eventually leave the SWP, it seems, primarily because he saw the organization as out of touch with the working class. His exit appears to have been motivated by a disillusionment with the group's cultishness rather than socialism more broadly. "They would explain everything by going back and finding a quote from Trotsky or from Lenin in order to explain things, as opposed to explaining how things were in the real world," Spira said. "They were basically just living in their own universe as opposed to making real life connections."

Beginning in the 1970s, after being exposed to Singer's work, Spira got involved in animalist activism. "Spira first gained notice in 1976 by leading a campaign seeking an end to the American Museum of Natural History's research on the impact of castration and other forms of mutilation on the sexual behavior of cats," according to Barnaby J. Feder. "When the research was halted in 1977, animal rights activists hailed the campaign as the first in more than a century of antivivisection efforts in the United States and Europe actually to result in an end to any animal testing."

Soon after, Spira organized a coalition of groups to oppose the use of Draize and LD/50 tests in the cosmetics industry. "The animal testing campaigns played a major role in forcing hospitals, government laboratories and universities to establish review boards to make sure that experiments used alternatives to animals — test-tube cultures, for example — where possible and to make sure that animals were not unnecessarily abused when they were used," Feder said, obviously describing reformist change. "Spira also negotiated with the cosmetics industry to provide initial financing to create the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore."

In the 1980s he turned his animalist efforts toward the farm industry. "He led a successful campaign to end face branding of cattle and negotiated with McDonald's and other fast-food companies to get them to supervise the practices of their suppliers more closely," Feder said. Spira died in 1998 at the age of 71.

Philly Socialist Bagot discusses species politics

Jonathan Bagot, formerly connected to the Revolutionary Communist Party, is now a member of Philly Socialists, a non-sectarian group. He recently agreed to an interview in which he discussed his views on animal treatment.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else? Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

Jonathan Bagot: I've self-identified as a Maoist over the past 15 years. Back then I gravitated towards the RCP since they were pretty much the only group in town that were close to being on the same page as me and active in the same causes I was concerned with locally. The internet was obviously present back then, but it was nowhere near what it is today. So actually having a local chapter that I could meet up with in my city really helped me connect with like-minded folk since participating in anything online was difficult and pointless — in terms of getting anything accomplished, debates on forums only go so far.

Then when I, and plenty of others, were done with what the RCP had become; Mike Ely founded the Kasama Project. I was at the founding conference, and worked with them for a few years. We tried to build something locally, but it just never came together in my town.

Currently I'm a member of Philly Socialists.

JH: How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left?

JB: I've been vegan and a supporter of animal rights for less time than I've considered myself a communist — vegan for about 11 or 12 years now? So it was interesting to see the before and after.

The before never involved vegan or vegetarian food being served at events, it meant meeting at places like McDonalds and animal rights just never being mentioned. Which actually surprised me even while I ate meat. I knew vegetarians outside of these circles, and assumed there would be more animal rights minded people involved with these political groups. Without thinking about it too deeply, it always seemed like a stereotype of the left to be vegetarian.

The after had me feeling like an outsider for being vegan, having to recommend better places to meet, and any ideas of animal rights being dismissed rather quickly. It was less shocking since I noticed previously that most socialists and communists ate meat. But what caught me off guard was how looked down upon vegetarians were for really no valid reason (besides guilt, I have to assume).

And how intelligent, deeply felt arguments would get shrugged aside by people that have spent hours a night studying Das Kapital but seemingly can't engage with anything that would challenge their desire for meat.

So really I had to go to anarchist events to satisfy that side — both for the vegan food and to engage with people about animal liberation. It was rather frustrating, and still is. People on the left get pretty self-righteous about standing up for humans before animals — then again, in my experience most meat eaters do that, left or right, as if they know what they're doing is wrong.

JH: Does your organization have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

JB: No, they do not. I've always respected the fact that the SP-USA had animal rights in their platform — I'm not sure how that plays out into their day to day actions, or even how their general membership feels about, besides looking nice on their website. But it's more than any other socialist party has done, as far as I've seen.

If Philly Socialists ever decided to put together a list of positions like that I would definitely present the idea at a General Assembly. But for now, we really don't have many "official positions" like most political parties do.

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

JB: Anytime something is commodified there will be human class exploitation at some point in the chain. But with speciesism I've found it interesting that human class sort of correlates with animal work. To compare someone who works with chickens and pigs versus horses in a similar setting is a bit of a leap in terms of pay and social status, then move on to any animals we don't eat and it's a whole other world. Then it's a huge leap to go to people that work with animals we'd consider even less common (say, in a zoo setting).

Clearly, considering some species less than others (e.g. animals processed into food in a factory, can't get much lower than that) will align the humans working with them to also be exploited at a higher rate.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal

veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

JB: The one part about this question that really hits me is the fact that we're talking about diet. The idea that you're actually fueling yourself on this awful product, it's coursing through your system. It's such an intimate chain of events. Much different than the shoe argument. At least that's how I feel about it.

Then not only are you fueling yourself on this product that represents everything your fighting against (whether you accept it or not), but you're then using that energy to do positive political work. It's so backwards.

And in terms of the boycott angle in general, I've always felt that whether being vegan is part of a larger solution or just you wanting to simply remove yourself from an awful system (but remaining in society, as opposed to, say, dropping out of capitalism by moving to a farm somewhere) why would you continue to consume those items? Is every decision you make part of some larger solution? Can't you just do the right thing and not be driven by some addiction to a taste? Especially these days when simply doing the right thing can be done so easily and affordably.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

JB: I guess as much as any capitalism is "possible"? There's so much "green capitalism" these days, I assume veganism can fit into that dynamic.

I know day to day when I deal with fully vegan businesses that they're not perfect, there's exploitation down the line at some point. Most likely animals are being exploited three degrees from whatever product I'm purchasing.

It was interesting, just the other day there is this vegan shoe company I follow on Facebook, and they posed a question about sweatshops to their fans. Something like "do you even think about sweatshops? does that matter? or do you only care about animals?" I was surprised to see some of the responses where people honestly never thought about that. So I'd like to think all of that would at least be part of a vegan capitalism.

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

JB: I hadn't read Torres or Hribal until you mentioned it. And I'll be honest, both view points are very interesting. Though when Jason talked about the service dog industry it seemed like he couldn't really build the same argument for laying hens. And even his service dog argument sounds like a stretch, compared with my

personal experience with dogs. But still interesting and I'd like to check out more of what he has to say beyond the interviews I've read.

My thinking is definitely more along the lines of Torres and the super exploited living commodity argument. It's hard to think of an animal that doesn't fit into that description. But I haven't really dug too deep into it, I'll definitely be checking out Torres' Making a Killing soon.

JH: British socialist Richard Seymour has said the relationship between animals and humans in Marxism is under theorized. Do you agree? If so, what areas are particularly lacking?

JB: I definitely agree. Even the small amount that exists has mostly been under my radar. I'd love to hear some thoughts on animal rights and Marxism in the Third World.

Pankhurst practiced prefigurative vegetarianism

Sylvia Pankhurst, a socialist, Ethiopian nationalist and a feminist, practiced prefigurative vegetarianism for some time, apparently out of concern for non-human animals.

According to John P. Gerber, Pankhurst's "Socialist Workers' Federation and their publication,'Workers' Dreadnought,'" was in Britain a "major theoretical center of left communism." Pankhurst's contacts included a veritable who's who of the European left. "She was in close touch with leading revolutionaries in Russia (Alexandra Kollantai), Germany (Clara Zetkin), Holland (Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, Henrietta Roland Horst), Italy (Antonio Gramsci and Amadeo Bordiga) and even Hungary (Bela Kun)," according to Barbara Winslow. Vladimir Lenin criticized her directly in his 1920 book 'Left Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder" for her opposition to electoral reformism in Britain.

Interestingly, Pankhurst's mother, Emmeline Pankhurst, the suffragette leader, was also a vegetarian for a time, according to 'Current Literature, Volume 45' a publication edited by Edward Jewitt Wheeler. The same source states Pankhurst's mother was an admirer of the anarchist animalist Louise Michel, although she did not accept "the erratic woman's political theories."

In 1907, Pankhurst, by all indications, ate non-human flesh. Recalling her time in prison early that year for her own feminist activism, she described the difficulties of vegetarians, but did not seem to count herself among this group. "When we had originally been put in the first class, Mrs. Cobden Sanderson, who was a vegetarian, was daily served the usual prison diet, and though she was obliged to leave the meat, no extra vegetables were allowed her, and she was obliged to live on her potatoes and bread," Pankhurst said. "Now a special dietary had been introduced for vegetarians, which consisted at this season of an alternation of carrots and onions,

with occasional rather stale eggs as a substitute for meat, and milk, night and morning, instead of cocoa and tea."

Decades later, Pankhurst was practicing prefigurative vegetarianism, for how long I'm unsure. But she gave it up following the outbreak of the Second World War. "Another change in the household resulted from the fact its mistress had been until then, on general humanitarian grounds, a vegetarian," according to her son, Richard Pankhurst. "But with the introduction of rationing — a system which she had advocated in the a First World War and greatly praised on account of its fairness — she felt it 'more practical' to turn to meat-eating like the population at

large."

As I've mentioned previously, I don't think individual dietary choices are particularly important to the animalist struggle. But I wonder what this abandonment of vegetarianism meant for Pankhurst. Was she giving up what she saw merely as a symbolic gesture toward non-human solidarity? Or did her return to flesh-eating represent the low priority she placed on animal lives and suffering?

In later life, according to Winslow, "Pankhurst never made any attempt to rejoin or work with her former comrades in the Communist Party. Shocked and horrified by [Joseph] Stalin, she denounced the 1936 Moscow Trials as a brutal farce. Having known and admired [Nikolai] Bukharin in particular, she knew he had been framed by Stalin." Still, according to Winslow, Pankhurst considered herself a socialist for the remainder of her life. She would die of heart failure in late 1960 at the aged of 78.

Shaw was socialist animalist

The Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, winner of the 1925 Nobel Prize in Literature, was a socialist animalist. A practitioner of prefigurative vegetarianism, Shaw was a critic of many forms of non-human exploitation, but is perhaps best known as an anti-vivisectionist.

In using the term 'animalist' here, I'm not referring to a follower of the fictional ideology in George Orwell's "Animal Farm.' Although that ideology did have anti-speciesist elements! Nor am I referring to the theory written about by philosophers such as Eric T. Olson, which truth be told, I know nothing about. Rather I'm using the term 'animalist' to indicate someone who to one degree or another supports the animal liberation project, which activist Ronnie Lee defined as "an end to all persecution, exploitation and killing of other animals by human beings or for us to reach a situation that is as near to that as possible." By 'socialist animalist' I mean someone who supports both public ownership of the economy and animal liberation.

It should be mentioned that Shaw's brand of socialism, Fabianism, was scorned by

many of the revolutionaries of his day. Friedrich Engels dismissed the Fabian Society as "a clique of bourgeois-socialists of diverse calibres, from careerists to sentimental socialists and philanthropists, united only by their fear of the threatening rule of the workers and doing all in their power to spike this danger by making their own leadership secure." Engels reserved only somewhat kinder words for Shaw himself, describing the writer as "very talented and witty as a

belletrist but absolutely useless as an economist and politician, although honest and not a careerist."

Shaw was clearly opposed to the exploitation of non-humans for food. He vividly described animal agriculture as the "monstrous habit of bringing millions of useless and disagreeable animals into existence for the express purpose of barbarously slaughtering them, roasting their corpses and eating them." The playwright apparently transitioned to vegetarianism in his mid-twenties, after reading the work of Percy Shelley. "I was a cannibal for twenty-five years," Shaw said. "For the rest I have been a vegetarian. It was Shelley who first opened my eyes to the savagery of my diet."

Shaw was critical of those animalists who presented the case for vegetarianism on the diet's health merits. "Why, if we prefer a clean and humane way of feeding ourselves to a nasty and cruel way, may we not say so, instead of raising foolish amateurish arguments about nitrogen and hydro-carbons and the rest of the figments of the science of 'metabolism?'" Shaw said. "I have not the slightest doubt, myself, that a diet of nice tender babies, carefully selected, cleanly killed, and tenderly cooked, would make us far healthier and handsomer than the haphazard dinners of to-day, whether carnivorous or vegetarian."

Shaw took his anti-vivisectionist comrades to task for the shortsightedness of their anti-speciesist politics. "On one occasion I was invited to speak at a large Anti-Vivisection meeting in the Queen's Hall in London," the playwright recalled. "I found myself on the platform with fox hunters, tame stage hunters, men and women whose calendar was divided, not by pay days and quarter days, but by seasons for killing animals for sport: the fox, the hare, the otter, the partridge and the rest having each appointed date for slaughter." When he spoke against animal exploitation broadly, rather than vivisection specifically, he found himself unwelcome at the gathering.

Regrettably, it appears that in his later years, like too many of those on the left, Shaw was duped into supporting an increasingly-tyrannical Soviet Russia. For instance, speaking of Joseph Stalin, who Shaw apparently met in person, the playwright said, "I have spent nearly three hours in Stalin's presence and observed him with keen curiosity, and I find it just as hard to believe that he is a vulgar gangster as that [Leon] Trotsky is an assassin." The anti-Stalinist socialist George Orwell claimed to see an authoritarian thread running through Shaw's writing. "No one has ever pointed out the sadistic and masochistic element in Bernard Shaw's work," Orwell

said, "still less suggested that this probably has some connection to Shaw's admiration for dictators."

Engels loved killing animals

Friedrich Engels, close collaborator to Karl Marx, supported the torture of animals in the form of vivisection. This position perhaps should not be surprising given his passion for blood 'sports.'

Writing to Marx in August of 1881, Engels complained about a publication's pro-animal stance. "Since I've been here I have been taking The Daily News instead of the Standard," Engels said. "It is even more stupid, if that is possible. Preaches anti-vivisectionism! Also as deficient in news as the Standard."

Writing to Karl Kautsky later that same month, Engels referenced the same factory inspector Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue alluded to in a pro-testing article I discuss elsewhere. Kautsky appears to have written his own defense of involuntary non-human experimentation, called 'Die Vivisektion des Proletariats,' but I've been unable to find an English translation of it.

"In Nature, you will find a speech made by John Simon before the International Medical Conference here in which the bourgeoisie is virtually put on the mat by medical science," Engels said. "Now he, a doctor, finding his own special field invaded by the Church-led bourgeoisie and their anti-vivisection movement, has turned the tables on them."

Here Engels was explicitly linking anti-vivisectionist belief to the capitalist class, seemingly in particular a religious subset, which he saw as opposed to rational thought. Viewing themselves as rational thinkers, Engels and Marx were deeply impressed with the work of Charles Darwin. But as Steven Best pointed out, what they failed to glean from the naturalist's work was "Darwin’s emphasis on the continuity of species, on the continuum of animal existence." This failure to accept the genuine implications of evolution allowed Engels to continue viewing animals as categorically different and inferior to humans.

"Instead of preaching dull and colourless sermons like Virchow, [Simon] goes into the attack comparing the few scientific experiments made by doctors on animals with the vast commercial experiments made by the bourgeoisie on the popular masses, thereby placing the question for the first time in its true perspective," Engels continued.

In a similar way that reactionary socialists might artificially counterpose the consideration of class and gender, or class and race, here Engels suggested a false dichotomy between political work on behalf of humans and political work on behalf of animals. I'd argue this dichotomy propagates what Marxists call 'false

consciousness,' in that it directs proletarian anger away from capitalists, the genuine exploiters of the working class, and toward animals and those humans who defend them. Triumphantly, Engels concluded, "The Congress, by the way, declared unanimously that vivisection was essential to science."

While I try to assess individuals' species politics based on their stated positions, rather than what might be failings in their personal practice, Engel's support for animal testing could perhaps be predicted by his enthusiasm for hunting non-humans. His speciesism, after all, was not a passive acceptance of our society's omnivority. Rather Engels actively sought out opportunities to kill animals for pleasure. He enjoyed it.

Writing to Marx in 1857, according to Tristram Hunt, Engels said, "On Saturday, I went out fox-hunting – seven hours in the saddle. That sort of thing always keeps me in a state of devilish excitement for several days; it's the greatest physical pleasure I know...At least 20 of the chaps fell off or came down, two horses were done for, one fox killed (I was in AT THE DEATH)."

Lafargue recalled Engels' gruesome talent and passion for murdering non-humans. "He was an excellent rider and had his own hunter for the fox chase," Lafargue said. "When the neighbouring gentry and aristocracy sent out invitations to all riders in the district according to the ancient feudal custom, he never failed to attend."

Engels eventually developed what Hunt, his biographer, describes with abhorrent approval as bloodlust. "Yesterday I let myself be talked into attending a coursing meeting at which hares are hunted with greyhounds, and spent seven hours in the saddle," Engels said. "All in all, it did me a power of good though it kept me from my work."

Soviets exploited dogs as living explosives

In the Second World War, the Soviet Union exploited dogs as living, anti-tank explosives in their fight against the Germans, following Adolf Hitler's 1941 breaking of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The agreement between the two nations, which had been made in the summer of 1939, was, according to the exiled Bolshevik Leon Trotsky, an "extra gauge with which to measure the degree of degeneration of the [Soviet] bureaucracy, and its contempt for the international working class."

"The training [of the non-humans] was innovative, to say the least, and cringe-inducing in its cruelty." Bryan D. Cummins said. "Accustomed to carrying explosives on their backs, the dogs were kept hungry and fed only under moving tanks. Thus the unfortunate dogs learned to anticipate the weight on their backs, the rumblings of the tanks and a meal. Each dog is alleged to have carried 30 pounds (13 kg) of explosives on its back, to be detonated by wooden levers on their backpacks that hit against the underbelly of the tank as the dog ran under it, seeking food."

The plan largely backfired, Cummins said, because the dogs, trained to look under Soviet-made tanks for food, did so in the field as well, ignoring the German vehicles. In one case, Soviet troops shot all of their involuntary canine soldiers to prevent them from inadvertently destroying Russian tanks. Still, Cummins said, "the Soviets claimed that several German tanks had, in fact, been destroyed using anti-tank [dogs] at the Battle of Kursk in 1943 and captured German documents corroborate the claim."

In his memoir, Soviet soldier Mansur Abdulin recalled meeting the dogs condemned to death. "As someone who grew up in the Siberian forestland, I really

love dogs, and I was appalled to learn about the fate of these creatures," Abdulin said. "What does a meek animal, so dear to children, have to do with this mess? A dog is a faithful friend. Yet we were apparently sending these trusting companions to die under enemy tanks!"

Later, according to Abdulin, during a German attack, perhaps five of the starved dogs, looking for food, were killed by the explosives strapped to their backs. The animals' deaths repelled the Nazi advance, causing his comrades to celebrate. He felt he should be happy too. "But instead I wept, cursing the war and the monsters who started it," Abdulin said.

For its part, the United States War Department was inspired by the Soviet Union's exploitation of dogs, and started a similar trial program at Fort Belvoir in 1943. However, acording to John M. Kistler, "rather than targeting enemy armor, the animals were trained as 'bunker busters' to enter Japanese tunnels and fortifications with timed explosives." Thankfully, nothing came of the program. This was for two central reasons. "No one could be certain that the dog would always go to the target and not return to 'friendlies' and accidentally blow up allies," Kistler said. "[And] no one would donate their dogs to the military once it was learned they might be used as suicide bombers."

London inspired influential animalist group

Many may not be aware that the famed novelist Jack London, author of "The Call of the Wild" and "The Iron Heel" among others, was a socialist. Fewer still might be aware that the writer, who often wrote from the point of view of non-humans, inspired the creation of a powerful animalist organization. Sadly, London's legacy was tarnished, above all, by his racism.

A member of the Socialist Labor Party before joining the Socialist Party of America, London launched a nationwide lecture tour on the subject of working- class revolution in 1906, according to Ira Kipnis. He was an admirer of the Industrial Workers of the World, and met with the Wobbly leader 'Big Bill' Haywood, "although he never joined them in going so far as to recommend sabotage," Clarice Stasz said. After London died at the age of 40, the great socialist Eugene Debs

expressed his condolences in a letter to the writer's widow. "Your beloved husband was very dear to me as he was to many thousands of others who never had the privilege of laying their eyes upon him," Debs said. "I felt the great heart of him, loved him, read nearly everything he wrote, and rejoiced in applauding his genius."

London was, according to Lucy Robins Lang, a proselytizing vegetarian for a time, before returning to omnivority. One is unsure whether his temporary abstinence from meat was motivated by concern for animals, and if so, whether his return to flesh represented the abandonment of what he merely saw as a symbolic gesture toward non-human solidarity or the low priority he placed on animal lives and suffering.

In the preface to his novel 'Michael, Brother of Jerry,' which was published after his death, London argued readers should join animalist organizations. "First, let all humans inform themselves of the inevitable and eternal cruelty by the means of which only can animals be compelled to perform before revenue-paying audiences," London wrote. "Second, I suggest that all men and women, and boys and girls, who have so acquainted themselves with the essentials of the fine art of animal-training, should become members of, and ally themselves with, the local and national organizations of humane societies and societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals."

London advocated walkouts of performances that exploited animals as entertainment. "We will not have to think of anything, save when, in any theatre or place of entertainment, a trained-animal turn is presented before us," London said. "Then, without premeditation, we may express our disapproval of such a turn by getting up from our seats and leaving the theatre for a promenade and a breath of fresh air outside, coming back, when the turn is over, to enjoy the rest of the programme. All we have to do is just that to eliminate the trained-animal turn from all public places of entertainment."

According to Earle Labor, his call "was answered with the formation of the Jack London Club dedicated to this crusade. The club achieved an international membership of nearly one million before its disruption by the Second World War." In 1925, in response to protests by the Jack London Club, the Ringling- Barnum and Bailey circus removed all animal acts from their performances, according to Diane L. Beers. As modern socialist animalist Jason Hribal stated, this was "an extraordinary feat which no contemporary organization, such as PETA, HSUS, or the ASPCA, has yet to accomplish." Sadly the victory was short lived. "Just five years later, Charles Ringling announced that his show would once again include trained big cats," Beers said.

Again, it should be mentioned that London's legacy was marred by racism. "As therapy Jack plunged into the works of Nietzsche," according to London's biographer Alex Kershaw. "Nietzsche, like Jack, believed that different races inherited different traits, although he condemned racism. Jack overlooked this key

distinction, or perhaps chose to ignore it. Anglo-Saxons, he believed, were the only true supermen. Lesser breeds -- racial weaklings -- should make way for the

Anglo-Saxons, who would alone determine the destiny of the human race."

The socialist George Orwell argued that London betrayed other right-wing tendencies. I don't know enough about London to have an informed opinion on the matter. But Orwell went further, seeming to identify London's empathy with non-humans as indication of latent fascism, which is puzzlingly problematic. "In an intellectual way London accepted the conclusions of Marxism, and he imagined that the 'contradictions' of capitalism, the unconsumable surplus and so forth, would persist even after the capitalist class had organized themselves into a single corporate body," Orwell said. "Temperamentally he was very different from the majority of Marxists. With his love of violence and physical strength, his belief in 'natural aristocracy', his animal-worship and exaltation of the primitive, he had in him what one might fairly call a Fascist strain."

Socialist Alternative candidate discusses animal issues

Jess Spear is the Socialist Alternative candidate for the Washington State House in the 43rd district. An ally of Kshama Sawant, who was recently elected to the Seattle City Council on the same party line, Spear exemplifies a new generation of far-left electoralism, the likes of which has not been seen in quite a while. She recently agreed to an interview in which she discussed her views on non-human exploitation.

Jon Hochschartner: Why should those concerned by the treatment of animals vote for you?

Jess Spear: We are facing an environmental catastrophe that threatens every animal on this planet, and has already wiped out thousands of species. Politics as usual is working great for these mega-corporations, but it's not working for working people or non-human animals.

Those concerned by the treatment of animals should vote for me because I stand in solidarity with them and their struggle to end the needless suffering of animals exacerbated under the economic system we live under —capitalism — that sacrifices everything on the altar of profit. Animal exploitation, environmental destruction, and human suffering are the very reasons I am a socialist fighting for a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

My opponent, Frank Chopp, takes money from corporations destroying our environment, causing human deaths, and instigating a mass extinction —notably BP Oil. He represents corporations, not people. I take no money from corporations.

JH: Does Socialist Alternative have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change?

JS: As socialists, we see the incredible damage that capitalism has caused to our environment as a byproduct of the profit motive. Oil companies pollute with impunity and are the most profitable corporations in the world. Farms exist not to provide high quality food, nutrition, and jobs to society, but to make the maximum profit for private companies and Monsanto.

Socialist Alternative is primarily focused on human liberation. We stand for democratic socialism, which is the organization of society focused on meeting human need and environmental sustainability, not profit. Through the democratic planning of society we can achieve a world where humans and non-humans alike are treated with kindness and respect. Society has the technology, talent, and resources to realize this goal.

To end animal suffering, we must first work to build the power of the working class, fight for better living standards and reforms, and ultimately usher in a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. We stand with animal rights activists who are fighting this system and pointing out the terrible impact the profit motive has on all life on this planet.

JH: What public policy proposals, that you could take action on, would you support for animals if voted to the Washington state house?

JS: I would support legislation that mitigates the suffering of animals. We would call for:

— End the tax breaks and incentives for large factory farms, and bring them into public ownership under democratic control with compensation to the former owners on proven need.

— Invest in community controlled, publicly owned farms, or a network there of, to provide basic nutritious food for low cost or free, run by the city, state, and community.

— End the use of known and suspected poisons and carcinogens in food products, on animals, and humans until proven safe!

— No gag laws to stop whistle blowers!

— Access to high quality food is a right, not a privilege of wealth. Working people should have the right to know, and a say in how our food is grown, the environmental impact of the process, and the treatment of animals and humans involved in the process.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the fights for socialism and better treatment for animals intertwined?

JS: Socialists see the economic system we live under, capitalism, as dysfunctional and completely unable to meet the needs of humans and the environment that sustains us (including animals). The struggle for more humane treatment of animals arises from the same core of human empathy that stirs one to speak out against, and act to stop, human suffering.

The suffering of animals and humans alike is unnecessary. We now have the technology and resources to provide a high standard of living for all on the planet — quality food, clean water and sanitation, decent housing, education, healthcare, and purposeful occupations — without causing needless animal suffering. But, the application and sharing of scientific innovations and technology necessary to provide this standard of living is held back by capitalism.

Capitalism depends on exploitation of all kinds and of many species, with the few ruling the many for the benefit of the few and to the detriment of the many. We strive to build working-class power through mass movements, whereby working people realize their inherent power as a class and wield that power to overturn this system and replace it with one of equality and cooperation.

A society where the economy is democratically run opens the possibility to enjoy the bounties of the world in a way that does not exploit our non-human brothers and sisters. Under capitalism, exploitation of both of humans and non-humans, is unavoidable. It is the only way to secure increasing profits. It is why we live in the richest country in the world, yet so many abhorrent practices towards animals by corporations like Tyson are protected from scrutiny and carry on their exploitation in secret. They know that people would not approve of what they did, which shows that people fundamentally and overwhelmingly do not want to take part in this exploitation.

Under capitalism, however, most people have no choice. Wages for most people are so low that they are barely scraping by. When you are making poverty wages and trying to keep your family alive, you don't have the luxury to turn down a 99-cent hamburger, no matter how it was made. People eat at places like McDonalds overwhelmingly for the same reason they shop at Wal-Mart: they have no other choice. Under this system, the ability to shop with a conscience is a luxury that most cannot afford. Until we cast off the tyrannical shackles of economic oppression under capitalism, we cannot make any significant headway to change the way animals are treated. Once the exploited workers of the world are free from exploitation, we will have the liberty to move on to ending animal suffering.

Steinem is anti-vivisectionist

Gloria Steinem, honorary chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, has spoken against vivisection and the abuse of companion animals. Her view of other forms of non-human exploitation are unclear. Steinem is perhaps best known as a leading

second-wave feminist who co-founded Ms. Magazine.

In a 2014 interview with iBerkshires, Steinem was asked whether she saw a link between the subjugation of non-humans and the subjugation of women. "Yes, actually I do and it's interesting statistically it's true," she said. "The vast majority of the animal rights individual human beings are females." Steinem made a stronger statement regarding this connection, according to a 2007 blog post on the People For Ethical Treatment of Animals website. Protesting Covance Inc.'s use of vivisection, she said, "Animal abuse is connected to domestic abuse — literally in a household, but societally in a more general way, too."

In another PETA post, which is undated, Steinem was quoted in opposition to vivisection performed by the National Institutes of Health. "I am adding my voice to others calling for an end to these and other cruel and useless experiments — on behalf of the animals who are being pointlessly made to suffer and die, on behalf of women whose health concerns are starved for funds, and on behalf of taxpayers who are being defrauded," she said. Her prescription for this 'triple injustice,' as she apparently called it, was merely to reduce the usage of animals in testing. One is unsure if this reformism is tactical or ideological. "I am writing to ask that you address this cruelty, fraud, and waste by drastically reducing reliance on animal models, and improving oversight of grant monies, thus also saving the energy of citizen protest for causes that allow us all to move forward together," Steinem

said. "You must understand that this goes beyond even the famous Golden Fleece Award for wasted tax dollars. In this case, there is blood on the fleece."

I don't believe there are individual solutions to systemic problems like animal exploitation, so I don't particularly care about personal dietary choices. Animalists should be working toward public veganism that is legally enforced at the point of production. Trying to create mass, voluntary change at the point of consumption is a Sisyphean task. But in attempting to assess individuals' species politics, I often check to see whether they practice vegetarianism or veganism, as this can of be a symbolic representation of their opposition to animal slaughter. As it happens, Steinem is some kind of flexitarian, according to a biography of her Patricia Cronin Marcello. But Steinem's diet was not apparently inspired by concern for non-humans. "I'm also a modified vegetarian," she said. "I eat seafood and dairy products but not red meat or chicken, as a result of having breast cancer."

It should be said that, like anyone else, Steinem is not without her critics, including those coming from her economic left. For instance, writing in 2005, Sharon Smith, a leader of the International Socialist Organization and author of 'Women and Socialism: Essays on Women's Liberation,' suggested Steinem was not truly committed to class struggle. "While it is true that the Gloria Steinem of today is quite different than the Gloria Steinem of 1970 — the change in feminism has not been qualitative," Smith said. "Occasional lip service aside, mainstream feminism has never sought to represent any other class of women than the upper- middle class.

Feminism has merely evolved to reflect the changing circumstances of this class of women."

Animalists should focus on commonalities, not differences

There's a great joke, of which there seem to be many variations, about the ludicrousness of a certain kind of sectarianism, that animalists could learn from. There appear to be many variations of the gag. In a 2005 article for the Guardian, comedian Emo Phillips claimed to have come up with the it, originally using the context of Christian denominations. But I originally heard the joke in the context of socialism. It was very similar, if not identical, to the version reposted to Louis Proyect's blog, 'The Unrepentant Marxist,' which goes like this.

An elderly fellow named Sam was walking along the Brooklyn Bridge one day when he saw a man of similar age, standing on a ledge, about to jump. Sam ran toward the other man, shouting not to kill himself. The other guy, who we'll call Joe, asked why not? He'd been a socialist all of his life and the possibility of working-class revolution seemed as hopeless as ever. Surprised, Sam said he was a

socialist as well, before asking Joe if he had been in Communist Party USA. Joe said he had. Sam said he had too, before continuing, "Did you join the pro-Trotsky Communist League of America in 1928, which later merged with the American Workers Party to form the Workers Party of America in 1934?" Joe answered in the affirmative.

Sam exclaimed, "Spooky, me too! After the WPA was expelled from the Socialist Party of America in 1936 did you go on to join the Socialist Workers Party USA and the Fourth International?" Joe said he did. It went on like this, question after question revealing their common trajectory in the history of leftist sectarianism. Sam asked, "In the 1940 dispute did you side with Cannon or Shachtman?" He found that they both sided with James P. Cannon. Sam continued, "In 1962 did you join Robertson's opposition caucus, the Revolutionary Tendency?" And the man on the ledge did, just like Sam.

Sam said, "And I bet that like me you were expelled and went on to join the International Communist League?" Joe said that went without saying. Sam plowed further, "In 1985 did you join the International Bolshevik Tendency who claimed that the Sparts had degenerated into an 'obedience cult?'" Joe said he hadn't, which Sam hadn't either. Finally, Sam asked, "In 1998 did you join the Internationalist Group after the Permanent Revolution Faction were expelled from the ICL?" Joe answered he had joined the Internationalist Group, and exhilarated by their shared history, began to reconsider suicide. But Sam pushed Joe off the bridge, shouting, "Die, counterrevolutionary scum!"

At the risk of ruining the joke, the humor here, of course, largely comes from how much Sam and Joe had in common in relation to an already microscopic political

subset, but how ultimately none of that mattered. When Sam discovered they shared a tiny, irrelevant difference, he had to literally destroy Joe. Ironically, Sam opposed Joe with far more vehemence than he might someone whose politics were genuinely well to the right of his.

This dynamic should sound very familiar to animalists, and one imagines the gag could be easily rewritten for our context. We all know the countless fault lines — whether one supports individual violence, whether one supports the large non-profits, whether one is a reformist, whether one is a tactical reformist. The different ideological litmus tests we have created, and I certainly include myself in this, are endless. And the great irony is that to those outside the incredibly marginalized anti-speciesist movement, none of these differences matter. To them, we are all those 'animal-rights wackos,' just like, to an uninvolved observer, Sam and Joe are both 'socialist nut jobs.'

Our elevation of the comparatively minor tactical or ideological differences

between us is really an expression of the powerlessness of our movement. Consciously or not, when we do this, we are conceding that societal change on behalf of animals, however minor, is impossible. We retreat into a sectarian hovel, where we duke it out amongst ourselves, quixotically fighting those who deviate from the correct animalist line. This of course, doesn't help animals. The only way to create real change for non-humans is to create a mass movement, which involves coalition building with those one might not entirely agree, including those whose species politics are reformist. We have to unite.

HSUS founder implicated in Red Scare

I recently came across the allegation that Fred Myers, a founder of the Humane Society of the United States, was a communist. The charge appeared on HumaneWatch.org, a website maintained by the Center for Consumer Freedom, a shadowy corporate front group. Needless to say, as a socialist animalist, the accusation did not have the desired effect on me. Far from being a scarlet letter for HSUS, an organization with comparatively conservative species politics, it was a potential badge of honor. Sadly, there appears to be no substantive evidence that Myers was a communist, and if he were, he likely would have been a supporter of counter-revolutionary Joseph Stalin.

According to the HSUS website, "Fred Myers provided the essential vision, determination, and direction the fledging organization needed. Under his leadership, The HSUS not only survived its first decade, but established itself as a national animal-protection organization that addressed cruelties which lay beyond the capacity of local societies and state federations."

Myers testified before an investigative Senate subcommittee about his alleged communist ties on May 15, 1956, by which time historians argue the worst of the

second Red Scare was drawing to a close. At this point he was executive director of the newly formed HSUS. Myers was questioned primarily by chief counsel Robert Morris. The first aspect of Myers biography that Morris wanted to probe was Myers' chairmanship of the New York Daily Mirror unit of the New York Newspaper Guild in the 1930s. A New York Times reporter had testified that at the time Myers was a communist.

Apparently within the Guild at the time of Myers involvement, there was a right and left-wing faction. The left-wing faction was accused of being run by communists. Morris wanted to know with which Myers sided. "I was aligned with the faction which was accused of being Communist-led," Myers said. In response to further questions, he denied being a communist in the 1930s, and said he had no

memory of his accuser, Clayton Knowles, whatsoever. But Myers said he had no doubt the left-wing faction included communists, and that in fact he had no doubt about this at the time. "I was strongly of the opinion that the cause that the guild espoused was good," Myers said. "I thought it expedient and good to work with whoever would ally himself in that cause. I quite freely worked with people whom I thought to be or suspected of being Communists." Senator James Eastland asked Myers whether he had been a 'fellow traveler,' by which was meant someone sympathetic to communist goals but not a member of a communist organization. Myers denied this.

The interrogation then moved to Myers' tenure as executive director of the American-Russian Institute, following the end of the Second World War and Myer's public-relations work for the American Society for Russian Relief, for which he received the Soviet's Order of the Red Banner of Labor. According to Morris, both Myer's predecessor and successor at the Institute had invoked the Fifth Amendment when asked about their communist affiliations. Morris then questioned Myers about a trip he took to the Soviet Union.

As the testimony continued, it emerged that Myers had actually lost a job at New York Central Railroad in the late 1940s as a result of the Red Scare when the New York World-Telegram ran a story accusing him of being a communist. "I want to make the point perfectly clear that I have not at any time in any employment concealed anything about my career or my personal activities," Myers said. "I have nothing to be ashamed of."

HumaneWatch.org hosts a letter, dated 1958, it claims is from Larry Andrews, another HSUS founder, to a Senate subcommittee, in which Andrews accuses Myers of being a communist and having committed perjury in his 1956 testimony. "Myers is a communist and hence an enemy of our country," Andrews said. "Unless he is exposed and dismissed from his position, he will continue to dupe sincere, but gullible persons of wealth in the humane movement." Ludicrously, Andrews went on to suggest HSUS might be a communist front. While the letter certainly appears genuine, I've been unable to find it sourced anywhere but HumaneWatch.org. In an

email to me, a representative of the Center for Consumer Freedom said he believed the letter was obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request.

De Moura opposed animal testing

Born in 1887, Maria Lacerda de Moura, a Brazilian left-wing radical, was an opponent of animal testing. While she is often identified as an individualist

anarchist, this seems reductive, as numerous sources describe her as a supporter of class struggle who condemned capitalism.

According to Francesca Miller, de Moura was "sympathetic to the goals of international socialism, but rejected all political affiliation." Miller suggested she did this on feminist grounds, quoting from a 1932 book written by the leftist. "Up until now, which has been the party or program that presented a solution for the problem of female happiness?" de Moura said. "Who remembered to liberate women? ...Fatherland, home, society, religion, morality, good manners, civil and political rights, communism, fascism, every other ism, revolutions, and barricades...continues to be the slave, an instrument skillfully manipulated by men for their sectarian, power-hungry, economic, religious, political, or social causes."

She distanced herself from the mainstream of the feminist movement, June Edith said, "apparently feeling that the franchise would chiefly benefit middle-class women rather than aid the bulk of Brazil's population or alter the country's social structure." But de Moura "found no constituency for a socialist feminist movement," according to Susan K. Besse.

In a 2011 article titled 'Representations of science and technology in Brazilian anarchism,' Gilson Leandro Queluz provided rare English quotes from de Moura regarding animal testing. "I can only understand vivisection as a frenzy of unspeakable evil," de Moura said. "I cannot even see the advantage of the scientific drunkenness that puts thousands of guinea pigs and dogs and any kind of animal at the mercy of 'scientists.'"

De Moura was aghast at the experiments performed by the French surgeon Serge Voronoff, as many seem to have been. Voronoff, a frequent vivisectionist, was best known for involuntarily transplanting chimpanzees' testicles onto human males in an effort to cure impotence. "By 1923 forty-three men had received testicles from nonhuman primates, and by the end of Voronoff's career, that number reached thousands," according to Nathan Wolfe. "Although Voronoff had inherited a fortune as an heir to a vodka manufacturer, he made more money operating on many of the most important men of his day."

De Moura argued the surgeon's procedures represented "quack science of modern industrialism, the science that served the golden calf, the science of human vampirism exhausted by early senility that sucks the glands of animals." And

Voronoff's clients, she said, were "old, wealthy and powerful men, whose conscience was crushed by parasitism, whose safes were enriched at the expense of the exploitation of thousands and thousands of workers, at the expense of the martyrdom and servility of the human herd."

There appears to be more material available elsewhere regarding her species politics, but it's only in Portuguese. One hopes an enterprising socialist animalist familiar with the language might investigate this. Some sources state de Moura died in 1944, while others say she passed away a year later in 1945. She would have been in her late 50s.

Lafargue promoted speciesist false consciousness

In his 1900 essay, "The Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man," Paul Lafargue, son-in-law to Karl Marx and a revolutionary in his own right, promoted what socialists should recognize as a speciesist form of false consciousness, in that he directed proletarian anger away from capitalists, the genuine exploiters of the working class, and toward animals and those humans who defend them.

"Progress and Civilization may be hard on wage-working humanity but they have all a mother's tenderness for the animals which stupid bipeds call 'lower,'" Lafargue said. "Civilization has especially favored the equine race: it would be too great a task to go through the long list of its benefactions; I will name but a few, of general notoriety, that I may awaken and inflame the passionate desires of the workers, now torpid in their misery."

Lafargue, presumably speaking somewhat with tongue in cheek, divided horses into what he termed aristocratic and proletarian classes, with the former made up of non-human individuals exploited for racing and the latter included those exploited for more general work purposes. For Lafargue, an animal hater, the abuse of horses in both these categories was far too gentle.

"The equine aristocracy enjoys so many and so oppressive privileges, that if the human-faced brutes which serve them as jockeys, trainers, stable valets and grooms were not morally degraded to the point of not feeling their shame, they would have rebelled against their lords and masters, whom they rub down, groom, brush and comb, also making their beds, cleaning up their excrements and receiving bites and kicks by way of thanks," Lafargue said, identifying animals as beneficiaries of class exploitation with an unclear degree of seriousness. "Aristocratic horses, like capitalists, do not work; and when they exercise themselves in the fields they look disdainfully, with a contempt, upon the human animals which plow and seed the lands, mow and rake the meadows, to provide them with oats, clover, timothy and other succulent plants."

I'm not familiar with the racing industry of Lafargue's era, but I doubt he was either, as I find it hard to believe the industry was significantly more 'humane,' to

use an anthropocentric term, than that of our era. In today's industry, for instance, horses are regularly killed by heat stroke in races, lethal injection inflicted due to competition-related injuries, or simple slaughter when they're no longer profitable. Were it possible for members of the proletariat to switch places with these animals, I sincerely doubt any informed human workers would want to do so.

"Thrice happy is it for proletarian humanity that these equine aristocrats have not taken the fancy of feeding upon human flesh, like the old Bengal tigers which rove around the villages of India to carry off women and children; if unhappily the horses had been man-eaters, the capitalists, who can refuse them nothing, would have built slaughter-houses for wage-workers, where they could carve out and dress boy sirloins, woman hams and girl roasts to satisfy their anthropophagic tastes," Lafargue mused. This attempt at satire, it should be noted, implicitly concedes the exploitation of domesticated animals is in most cases worse than that of human workers.

"The proletarian horses, not so well endowed, have to work for their peck of oats, but the capitalist class, through deference for the aristocrats of the equine race, concedes to the working horses rights that are far more solid and real than those inscribed in the 'Rights of Man,'" Lafargue said, with offensive ignorance of the exploitation endured by horses used in both competition and labor. "We may still recall the noble indignation of the bourgeois press when it learned that the omnibus company was using peat and tannery waste in its stalls as a substitute for straw: to think of the unhappy horses having such poor litters!"

Again and again, Lafargue tried to manufacture an inherent link between animalism and defense of capitalist exploitation. "The more delicate souls of the bourgeoisie have in every capitalist country organized societies for the protection of animals," he said scornfully. "Schopenhauer, the bourgeois philosopher, in whom was incarnated so perfectly the gross egoism of the philistine, could not hear the cracking of a whip without his heart being torn by it."

Lafargue's speciesism, which is all too common on the socialist left, should be seen for what it is, a form of false consciousness, like homophobia, sexism or racism, which misdirects proletarian rage away from capitalists, who are actually responsible for worker exploitation, toward other victims of the ruling class who face special oppression and exploitation within the current order.

Dr. Murray talks socialist animalism

Dr. Mary Murray, senior lecturer at Massey University, agreed to an interview in which she discussed socialist animalism. She is the author of “The Underdog in History: Serfdom, Slavery, and Species in the Creation and Development of Capitalism,” which appeared in the 2011 compilation “Theorizing Animals.”

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else? Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with organized socialist or anarchist left?

Mary Murray: Yes, I am a socialist and would call myself a Marxist in terms of Marx's analysis of different kinds of societies and state systems, though I wouldn't call myself a Marxist in metaphysical terms. Indeed, ironically perhaps, despite Marx having a materialist conception of history, I think that actually raises the issue of Marxism being tied to a metaphysic, despite and because of its materialist conception of history. I sometimes find myself having sympathies with anarchism. I was involved with the Socialist Worker Party in the UK for several years. I have also been an active animal advocate for over a decade.

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

MM: I can think of many ways, e.g. slaughter house workers have their jobs because of speciesism. Slaughter house workers are exploited members of the working class. Similarly people who work for McDonalds are exploited workers and of course speciesism is central to the production of food in that company. Then of course there is the link between poor health and fast food, as well as the destruction of the environment.

JH: How does the materialist conception of history effect, if at all, your view of how animal liberation can be achieved?

MM: Despite Marx's speciesism I think that the materialist conception of history, tied as it is to forms of political organisation aimed at the emancipation of workers, can be developed to recognise animals as labourers, indeed slaves, and that a commonality of interest exits between humans and animals in this respect. The end of human slavery was brought about by cross-class alliances between humans, and although the ideology of speciesism can create 'false consciousness' we can already see that animal advocacy organisations can be a 'broad church' in terms of class, gender and ethnicity.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

MM: I think that it is possible to argue that personal veganism can be an individualistic solution to a systemic problem. However many people may not have the time or energy to get involved in animal activism, and so personal veganism is one oppositional stance that some people make whilst also recognizing that animal

exploitation is a systemic problem. I know a number of people who are animal activists but not vegan, many people who drive cars and are opposed to fossil fuel economies, and some who wear Nike products but are opposed to sweat shops. I think we have to work with where people are at, inclusively as possible, and hope that in time people make choices about what to eat, wear, and modes of transport that are consistent with their values.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

MM: I think that vegan capitalism could be possible – we already have many retail outlets that sell vegan products whilst making a profit. Vegan capitalism may also lessen the suffering of animals. However I think that the exploitation of humans, animals and the environment are interconnected and that we should be working towards the ending of all three forms of exploitation.

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

MM: I haven't read the work of either author. However I consider that animals are part of the proletariat, and in fact they are often slaves. I also think that the development of a revolutionary class consciousness should/could involve humans dropping speciesism. Racism cuts across revolutionary class consciousness, but can be transcended, so why can't speciesism be transcended? As we know the labour power of humans is exploited. The labour power and reproductive capacity of animals is also exploited, and this I think this raises questions about a Marxist tendency to focus on production, despite the fact that we know from the early works of Marx that production and reproduction were stressed. Is Torres arguing that being a super exploited living commodity somehow undermines revolutionary potential? I will need to read Hribal and Torres to answer this question properly.

JH: British socialist Richard Seymour has said the relationship between animals and humans in Marxism is under theorized. Do you agree? If so, what areas are particularly lacking?

MM: Yes, I agree with Seymour. There is much work to be done I think re the state, globalisation, war, and also the relationship between Marxism, feminism and humans and animals, and the use of animals in research.

Wolfe likely motivated by animalist concern

Born in 1875, Lilian Wolfe, whose name is spelled in different ways in different

sources, was a British feminist, anarchist and vegetarian. According to George Woodcock, she was a friend and collaborator to the influential anarcho-communist

Peter Kropotkin. Given her residency at the Whiteway Colony, a community inspired by Leo Tolstoy, one might assume her diet was inspired by concern for animals.

The seriousness with which Wolfe seemed to regard her vegetarianism can be seen in her steadfastness to the diet during her incarceration for opposing World War I. "The anarchists round the newspaper Freedom had their own anti-war organization," Sheila Rowbotham said. "Lilian Woolf, an ex-suffragette who became an anarchist, was imprisoned [in 1916] for giving out anti-war leaflets to troops. Pregnant and unmarried on principle, she remained a vegetarian in prison and was forced to drink cabbage water to provide herself with some nutrition."

While I no longer put much emphasis on the importance of prefigurative vegetarianism or veganism, I must admire her tenacity in this instance, even if it was for what I see now as a mostly symbolic end. How much time Wolfe served in custody is unclear. She "was sentenced to £25 or two months and went to prison, but there discovered she was pregnant (at the age of 40), so paid the fine and was released," according to Donald Rooum.

She administrated Freedom Press, which identified with libertarian communism, for much of her life. "For more than twenty-five years Lilian Wolfe was the centre of the administration of Freedom Press at its various premises in London," Nicolas Walter said. "She was the person on whom every organization depends — the completely reliable worker who runs the office, opening and closing the shop, answering the telephone and the post, doing accounts and keeping people in touch. She maintained personal contact with the thousands of people who read the paper."

When the socialist George Orwell was sick with tuberculosis in 1949, an illness that eventually claimed his life, Orwell's young son, Richard Blair, was sent to live at the Whiteway Colony, near the sanitarium where his father was being treated. He was placed in Wolfe's care. Orwell, it should be mentioned, was hostile to what Whiteway represented. "If only the sandals and pistachio-colored shirts could be

put in a pile and burnt, and every vegetarian, teetotaler and creeping Jesus sent home to Welwyn Garden City to do his yoga exercises quietly," Orwell said. "As with the Christian religion, the worst advertisement for Socialism is its adherents."

For what it's worth, Blair seemed to enjoy his time at Whiteway. "As far as I can recall I was perfectly happy there and even attended a local kindergarten for a few weeks, until mid-August," Blair said. "I remember regularly waiting with someone to catch a bus to go and visit my father and, on arrival, would always ask him where it hurt."

Orwell described Whiteway and Wolfe herself with no small amount of condescension. The community was "some sort of anarchist colony run, or financed, by the old lady whose name I forget who keeps the Freedom Bookshop," Orwell said. For Walter, this was quite a strange twist. "How nice to know that at the very end of

his life Orwell was helped by a high-minded woman who was not only an anarchist but a pacifist, and also a vegetarian and a teetotaler," Walter said. "A perfect irony to close the case of Orwell and the anarchists!" Wolfe died in 1974, at the age of 98.

How does historical materialism affect animal liberation?

Socialist animalists should consider how, if at all, the materialist conception of history, an important facet of Marxism, affects their view of the way in which animal liberation can be achieved. To be clear, I'm using the term 'animal liberation' to mean an end to domestication and other forms of exploitation of other species by humans, or a situation as near to that as possible.

First it's important to understand what Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels meant by saying they viewed history from a materialist perspective. "When we say that Karl Marx was a materialist, we don't mean that he hankered after possessions," socialist Paul D'Amato said. "And when we say that Marx was not an idealist, we aren't saying he didn't have ideas about how to change the world. In the history of the philosophy, idealism and materialism have very different meanings than their popular usage. They represent the two main divergent ways of looking at the world we live in."

D'Amato went on to explain the difference between these two divergent views. "For the idealist, the mind—or the spirit, in the form of God—is the origin of all material things," D'Amato said. "For the materialist, all of reality is based on matter, including the human brain which is itself a result of the organization of matter in a particular way."

The materialist conception of history, subsequently dubbed historical materialism,

attempts to trace changes in human economic and societal forms to changes in productive capacity and technology. In contrast, "most historical inquiry is arbitrary in that it fails to discover the key material factors that shape history," D'Amato said. "The idealist conception—that ideas shape history—is the least satisfactory because it is the most arbitrary. It cannot explain why particular ideas arise at a certain moment in history, or why at that particular moment in history those ideas were able to influence the course of events."

Scholars still debate the degree to which Marx and Engel's historical materialism was deterministic. One quote, for instance, from The Poverty of Philosophy, published in 1847, suggests Marx was a strong fatalist. "In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations," Marx said. "The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist." Similarly, Marx and Engels come across as hard determinists in the Communist Manifesto of 1848. "What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers," the pair wrote. "Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

Applying what might be called an overly-deterministic view of historical materialism to the possibilities of animal liberation, one might say that, like the triumph of the working class, an end to non-human exploitation is inevitable, but widespread anti-speciesism is impossible without the further development of technologies such as in-vitro meat, and thus animalist struggle is useless in the here and now. In my gloomier moments, this is certainly a thought that has passed my mind. But D'Amato cautioned against such an interpretation, drawing on quotes from Marx and Engels which support a greater degree of agency.

In 1852, for instance, Marx argued, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." Similarly, in 1890 Engels stated, "According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase."

D'Amato seemed to uphold the value of individual struggle by citing an observation made by Georgi Plekhanov, in which the Russian revolutionary asked why Marx and Engels would expend so much energy attempting to raise class- consciousness if socialism would be achieved solely through economic necessity. D'Amato summed up what he viewed as an accurate interpretation of the

materialist conception of history this way. "Ideas do change history, but only if they become material forces, supported by masses of people, and in conditions that make the establishment of new social relationships a real possibility," D'Amato said. "To put it crudely, the dream of a society that shares the wealth so that everyone can lead a decent life is merely a dream if the material means of producing that wealth aren't sufficiently developed so there is enough to go around."

So what are the conditions necessary for an end to non-human exploitation? What conditions, if any, are we lacking? How does the material conception of history affect our view of how animal liberation can be achieved?

Mecha, Tofu, and Revolution

(Author's note: what follows is a fiction, heavily based on and inspired by historian Isaac Deutscher's "Prophet" series and painter Jakub Rozalski's "1920+" project.)

By Jon Hochschartner

Leon Trotsky sat in his Moscow office, sipping on his coffee and nibbling a vegan muffin as he read the morning paper. The year was 1918, and it was late November.

Snow gathered on the windowsill, and a massive grey robot, a mecha, operated by a Russian worker inside it, plowed the street below. Trotsky was accustomed to the groans of the machine and the grinding of its plow, so it hardly bothered him.

Despite the cold, while reading the international news in Pravda, he felt warm with excitement. All of Europe seemed to be on the verge of revolution. Everything he had been working for his entire adult life seemed suddenly possible. Even if the international-capitalist class managed to quell this insurrectionary wave, it would go down in history as one of the greatest blows to carnism and private enterprise to date. In all likelihood, however, it would only be a matter of time before a Soviet Germany, and others, joined Russia in forming a pan-European, socialist federation.

Trotsky took a deep drink from his coffee mug as he gazed out of his frosted study window. Above Moscow's skyline, stars faded in anticipation of the morning light. What a time to be alive, he thought to himself contentedly.

A few months later, alongside his comrade Vladimir Lenin, Trotsky oversaw a meeting of Left Socialist delegates from abroad. They met around a circular table in the basement of the Kremlin. Hot cider and freshly baked donuts, vegan of course, were served on the Tsar's old china.

Laughing, one delegate spoke of stealing past a group of his government's light mecha patrolling the country's border. "And then I bolted for the forest," the delegate said, through an interpreter. "The trees were too thick for 'bots to follow me. Larger mechas could have done it —smashed right through — but not these!" Trotsky and Lenin guffawed along with him indulgently.

The not-so-humble goal of the meeting was to establish a Third International, a global association of communist organizations, or at least begin the process of this. When the group's conversation drifted into apolitical banter, Lenin gently, but firmly, steered it back toward the formation of a new International, to replace that which disintegrated during and was so discredited by the recently-concluded, imperialist war.

Trotsky, wearing his signature pleather coat, peered out at the assembled delegates from behind his round, wire-rim glasses. Could this rag-tag group of about forty, who admittedly represented many more, change the world? He certainly hoped so. The testimony of the Austrian delegate bolstered this wish.

"The working class of Austria is on the brink of following the bold path of their Russian brethren," she declared, as an interpreter translated her impassioned monologue for the receptive audience. "We must raid the barracks and arm the workers. With 1,000 mecha we could crush the reactionaries of our country and immediately begin the process of socialization and veganization."

The other delegates broke into enthusiastic applause. The confidence of the

representative from Austria was quite stirring and contagious. However, when the Left Socialist from Germany spoke, he quickly sombered the audience, much to Trotsky's irritation.

"We must not forget what occurred in my country not two months ago," the German said quietly through an interpreter. "A premature uprising led to the execution of our leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The Freikorps shot them in the street! Comrade Luxemburg's body has still not been found."

The German dabbed at his eyes with his handkerchief, presumably wiping away tears, before continuing on. "The sad truth is that the organizations represented at this meeting, aside from that of our hosts," the delegate said, motioning toward Lenin and Trotsky, "are too weak to form a new International. We must be realistic."

While Lenin and Trotsky were careful to treat the memory of Luxemburg and Liebknecht with the utmost respect, they argued against the German representative's position forcefully. Ultimately, after much debate, the gathering agreed to form a Third International.

Of course, at the time, the newly formed Soviet republic was embroiled in a brutal civil war, which primarily pitted the Bolshevik Red Army against the conservative White Guard, who opposed veganizing and socializing Russia's economy. It should be said that the Whites were supported by the Allied capitalist governments, who inserted over 100,000 soldiers and perhaps 2,000 mecha into the conflict. Explaining this, the British Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill, told the London press that the Marxist-animalist threat of Bolshevism had to be "strangled in its cradle."

During that period, Trotsky was chairman of the Bolshevik's Revolutionary Military Council, which put him in charge of the Red Army as a whole. The overwhelming amount of his time was spent onboard an armored train, carrying approximately 500 soldiers and 200 mecha, which criss-crossed through Russia, wherever the needs of the army might take him.

In 1919, on an evening in early August, Trotsky sat in his makeshift study aboard the rumbling train, which was hurtling through the Ural Mountains at a speed that was likely much too fast to be safe. Mikhail Glazman, Trotsky's stenographer, was in a chair nearby, smoking a pipe and reading the train's newspaper, printed on a portable press but a few cars back. The silverware, left over from the vegan kotley Trotsky had just eaten, rattled on the chairman's desk. Stroking his goatee absentmindedly, he was clearly in a ponderous mood.

Much had changed since the formation of the new International, when one could believe revolution was imminent throughout Europe. Soviet Hungary and Bavaria had been crushed by counter-revolutionary forces. Perhaps the Bolsheviks' strategy was all wrong, Trotsky thought, as he traced his finger across the map on his desk.

“Mikhail,” Trotsky said, clearing his throat, “what if we are faced in the wrong direction? What if the road to a Soviet London and a Soviet Paris is not through the west? Could it be through the east?”

The wheels of Glazman’s mind were turning, like those inside a mecha. “We could exert far more influence in Asia than we might in Europe, at least for now,” the stenographer said cautiously, still mulling it over. But Trotsky had reached his conclusion. The chairman stood up, thumping his fist on the desk in excitement. “Mikhail, take this down!” he said. “I want to dictate a policy recommendation for the Central Committee. We must fundamentally reorient our perspective!”

An hour or so later, Glazman marched a few cars down to the train’s telegraph station. He dropped Trotsky’s missive in the outgoing stack of messages and presumably Trotsky’s memorandum was forwarded to the Central Committee, who ignored it. This did not weigh heavily on Trotsky. His political imagination was constantly firing in so many directions at once that, within a few days, he was onto the next thing and had almost completely forgotten his urgent, foreign-policy recommendation. Events in the west would soon demand the chairman’s attention.

Poland had agreed to an informal ceasefire with the Bolsheviks. But pressured by the French, who saw the interests of carnist-capitalism threatened by the Russian experiment, Poland reneged on the agreement. In early March of 1920, Poland attacked Russia. Hearing the news, Trotsky immediately diverted his military train and returned to Moscow, where he knew Lenin would need him. Trotsky was in such a hurry that a half dozen of the smaller mecha, awaiting repairs, were left in the field to be retrieved later.

The next night, Trotsky paced angrily about Lenin’s Kremlin office, as the head of the Soviet government sat passively behind his desk, listening. “Those bourgeois corpse-munchers!” Trotsky exclaimed, gesticulating wildly. “Did I not say the Poles would betray us?” Lenin nodded as he steepled his hands and sighed. “We have to crush them,” Trotsky said. “We have to hit them so hard, capitalists the world over will not think of such a thing again.” He got no resistance from Lenin. “I agree, comrade,” the Soviet leader said, wearily. “I’m only asking what you need.”

On an early day in June, a few miles from Kiev, Trotsky inspected a brigade of his Red Army that was preparing to assist in the retaking of the Ukranian city from Polish forces. Trotsky walked with the unit’s commander, surveying the 4,000 infantrymen and 200 mecha of various sizes standing before them. The chairman paused before a scouting mecha, approximately 20-feet tall. Craining his neck, Trotsky could see the driver inside the cockpit.

“How are the unit rations, soldier?” Trotsky shouted up. The mustachioed man in the upper innards of the machine was a bit taken aback the chairman was speaking to him, let alone asking his opinion of something. So his response was delayed. “They’re good, sir,” the driver answered. “None of that Romanov chow?” Trotsky

continued, referring to the animal flesh served pre-revolution. “No sir,” the driver said proudly. This seemed to please Trotsky and he continued on, stopping occasionally to inquire about diesel and ballistic shipments, as well as buck up those soldiers who needed it.

“We must remember that this is not a nationalist war,” Trotsky shouted, in his eventual address to the whole gathering. “Our enemies are not the Polish people, but the Polish capitalists and landlords.” Thirty minutes later, when he’d finished his speech, Trotsky shook the unit commander’s hand, saluted the assembled troops, and boarded his train to inspect a regiment camped some miles away. In less then a week, the Red Army had retaken Kiev.

By July, there was debate within the Soviet leadership as to whether its army should continue into Poland. Lenin, Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin were eating in an otherwise empty Kremlin dining hall. It was late in the evening. “A few months ago, you told me we must crush the Poles,” Lenin said, putting down his fork, as he spoke to Trotsky. “That’s what a march on Warsaw will do.”

Trotsky, for all his militaristic bluster, did not believe the Red Army should enter Poland. “In 1917, we promised the Poles independence,” Trotsky said, paying no attention to the vegan shashlik on his plate. “Whatever provocations their ruling class engaged in, if we march on Warsaw, the Polish proletariat will think us no better than the Tsar.” Lenin waved his hand at Trotsky in exasperation. He turned toward Stalin, who was shoveling vegan stroganoff into his mouth, spilling a bit on his shirt and dipping his mustache in sauce. “What say you, comrade?” Lenin asked.

Ultimately the Soviet leadership voted to continue the offensive into Poland. As Trotsky predicted, the Red mechas marching through Polish towns were widely seen by the populace not as liberators, but as the latest iteration of Russian domination. On a mid-July afternoon, with his assistant Glazman, Trotsky sat in the audience of the second congress of the Third International held in Moscow. Since the previous year, the number of delegates to the event had swelled significantly.

Lenin stood before the assembled gathering, detailing Soviet advances into Poland on a large map. Since the conference hall was crowded and they sat in the back, Trotsky and Glazman could whisper without distracting notice from the presentation. “This is a disaster waiting to happen,” Trotsky said in frustration. “You can’t carry the revolution into another country on the barrel of a mecha’s machine gun.” Shortly after, he was proven correct. Polish forces routed their Russian counterparts in the battle of Warsaw.

It was a decisive victory for the Poles. Perhaps 100,000 Bolshevik soldiers were killed, wounded or captured. Soviet robots were also destroyed or appropriated in large numbers. Nearly twenty years later, it was common to see rusting Red mechas used as farming plows in the Polish countryside. The defeat was particularly frustrating for Trotsky because Lenin had spent decades insisting on the right to

Polish independence, even when Marxist-animalists in that country opposed the idea from an internationalist perspective. In short, Lenin should have known better. By October, the Bolsheviks had made peace with Poland.

In February 1921, Trotsky was in the Ural region, supervising the Red Army's construction of the Soviet Animal Sanctuary of Sverdlovsk. Gun turrets on the militarized mechas were replaced with fork-lift extensions, which were used to transport fencing and assemble barns. After the revolution, domesticated animals of Tsarist Russia were sterilized and placed in sanctuaries to live out their days free from human violence. However, as the civil war progressed, more animals were continually liberated as the White Army ceded territory to the Bolsheviks.

Trotsky stroked the head of a goat peaking her head through temporary fencing. She was such a gentle creature, he thought, before admonishing himself for his speciesist condescension. A Russian winter was hardly the best time to accomplish construction, but there was no other option. These animals needed shelter. Approaching from behind, Glazman interrupted Trotsky's solitary contemplation. "Have you heard the news?" Trotsky's stenographer asked.

As Trotsky turned, his eyes narrowed. He hadn't. "The Red Army has marched into Georgia," Glazman said. Trotsky was shocked. Nothing but vapor, visible in the cold air, escaped his mouth. Finally, Trotsky spoke, asking to no one in particular, "Has the Politbureau really not learned its lesson from the Polish debacle?" The nearby goat bleated, and he returned to scratching her chin.

"Apparently it's on the advice of Comrade Stalin," Glazman continued, not needing to mention Stalin was from Georgia and the Politbureau tended to defer to him on related matters. "He's of the opinion a Bolshevik uprising with popular support has taken hold in the country." Trotsky fumed. It was idiotic adventurism; why hadn't he been consulted? "There's no way such a rebellion has the backing of the masses in Menshevik Georgia," Trotsky said. And it didn't. A large force of Soviet mecha and ground troops took nearly two weeks to reach the Georgian capital of Tiflis, during which time the Red Army suffered substantial losses.

On his train, rattling its way back to Moscow, Trotsky read an account of the taking of Tiflis in Pravda. Eventually, he sighed and put down the day's edition of paper. "I guess there's nothing that can be done about it at this point," Trotsky said glumly to Glazman, who agreed. "I'll have to walk a fine line in my public statements. I can talk generally about the right of Russia to militarily assist genuine revolutions, but I won't go into detail about the Georgian case."

Glazman nodded. "I just can't afford to make trouble in the Politbureau right now," Trotsky said, almost apologetically. He looked out the train window, as the snowy countryside rushed past his view. "I should draft a telegram to Lenin though, about the need to treat the Georgians with a light hand," Trotsky continued, pouring soy creamer into his coffee. "You know, a minimum mecha force in civilian areas and

some respect for local leadership structures."

Glazman stood up, holding onto the back of his chair for balance as the train shook, and grabbed his notebook from the table on which he'd left it. "Do you want me to take notes, sir?" Glazman asked. Trotsky nodded, sipping delicately at his scalding beverage, before he seemed to reconsider. "On the other hand, what's the point?" Trotsky said, frustrated. "You can't really put a pleasant face on occupation. The Georgians are going to see us as continuing the Tsar's oppressive legacy either way."

In December of 1919, the Russian economy was grinding to a halt. Conflict with the White Army had destroyed countless railroad tracks and bridges. Under a policy dubbed 'War Communism,' requisition squads, typically made up of a few dozen soldiers supported by a mecha or two, scoured the countryside, confiscating the peasantry's agricultural surplus to feed the Red Army and urban populations. In reaction, peasants by and large stopped producing more crops than their families needed.

It was under these circumstances that Trotsky wrote to the Central Committee, proposing that the civilian workforce be organized on military lines. Lenin supported the idea. But it provoked heated opposition when the pair argued for the change at a conference of Bolshevik trade union leaders the next month. The meeting was held in a large hall on the second floor of the Kremlin. Looking rather uncomfortable, Lenin and Trotsky sat at the head of a long table, around which sat the labor representatives. Along the table were platters of vegan syrniki, beside a bowl of strawberry jam for dipping. The fritters, however, were largely untouched due to the heated nature of the discussion.

Fedor Ugarov, head of the mecha workers union, banged his fist on the table. "Trotsky wants to bring us back to the days of the Tsar, to military-run penal colonies," Ugarov bellowed. "That's what the militarization of labor means." This prompted shouts of agreement. Lenin at least feigned interest in what the union leaders were saying, diligently taking notes on their diatribes. But Trotsky had removed his spectacles, and was rubbing his eyes with a pained expression.

Boris Kozelov, leader of the typographer's union, was also against the proposal. "The Russian people are sick of war and the demands that come with it," Kozelov said. "Comrade Trotsky has contributed immeasurably to the Soviet military cause. But he's the last person who should be making policy for our civilian workforce."

When it was Trotsky's turn to speak, he argued the union representatives didn't know the true danger facing Russia's economy. "We are on the brink of disaster," he said. "Was my discipline in the Red Army harsh? Sure. But I did what had to be done to save the revolution. And that's what I hope to do now." In the end, however, the conference voted almost unanimously against the proposal for the militarization of labor.

The next morning, Trotsky slumped into a pleather chair in Lenin's office. He was not accustomed to such a rebuke. But it didn't appear to have significantly effected Lenin, who asked whether he wanted coffee or tea. Trotsky shook his head. "Chin up, comrade," the leader of the Soviet government said. "You mentioned the Revolutionary War Council of the Third Army, having completed its duties, doesn't have the necessary transport to send its troops home at the moment. Why not transform idle units into a labor force? The unions surely won't object to that."

This hadn't occurred to Trotsky. He worked through the implications out loud. "We could use it as a potential jumping-off point for the militarization of the civilian labor force," he said. Lenin, who seemed to have already reached this conclusion, smiled and raised his coffee mug in a silent toast.

Placed in charge of the effort, in early February, 1920, Trotsky and his staff were aboard a train, en route to the Ural Mountains, where he planned to inspect the labor armies stationed there. It was late in the evening; his assistant Glazman had gone to his quarters to sleep. But Trotsky remained in his study, composing a notice for the train's newspaper. He was putting the finishing touches on this piece when his makeshift office began to rumble violently. Trotsky could tell something was wrong. Then, with a crash, the car and all of its contents rolled onto its side as the train derailed.

A few minutes later, Trotsky regained consciousness. He was lying in the snow, where he had been thrown clear. The icy storm, which had caused the accident, whipped Trotsky's face as Glazman shook him awake. It would take nearly ten hours for an agricultural mecha from a nearby village to come to the crash site, place the train back on its tracks, and right those cars which had tipped over. During this time, with the collar of his coat upturned against the bitter cold, Trotsky surveyed the scene gloomily. He wondered whether labor militarization could truly fix Russia's economic ills.

When he returned to the capital, Trotsky accompanied Lenin on a ceremonial tour of the Soviet Animal Sanctuary of Moscow, as it was the only time that day when the leader of the government was free to speak with him. Inside a heated shelter, Lenin nuzzled in his arms a grey chicken, to whom he cooed. "We need to stop requisitioning the peasants' surplus," Trotsky said intently. "Until this crisis has passed, we need to let them sell their crops on the market. They won't grow them otherwise."

Lenin laughed, while delicately placing the chicken on the sawdust-covered floor with her counterparts. "You're a free-trader now?" The Soviet leader asked mockingly. "What's next? Let the muzhiks return to animal exploitation if it will temporarily earn their favor? Really, I'm surprised at you." Lenin shook his head in disappointment, before asking one of the sanctuary staff to lead them to the next shelter.

With that rebuke, Trotsky returned to the position he was in before, seeking a solution to Russia's economic problems within the confines of War Communism. Perhaps realizing he had been overly harsh in his criticism, Lenin requested Trotsky take over the country's department of transportation, which, beyond the derailing of Trotsky's train, was in disastrous shape. Lenin surely meant it as a compliment, despite the extra work it would require from Trotsky, who was already overseeing the civil-war effort.

"However you want to handle this, I'll support you," Lenin said in the Kremlin cafeteria, while dipping a vegan grilled cheese sandwich in tomato soup. "You're my best man." Ultimately, the methods Trotsky used to fix the railroad system — militarization of the transportation workers — did not spark significant outcry and thus did not require any intervention by the Soviet leader on their behalf. This lack of controversy was no doubt due to the war raging in Poland, which had a silencing effect on potential critics.

In late June of 1920, Trotsky, backed by a contingent of Red Army guards, lambasted the workers of the railway repair shop in Murmansk. "Your laziness is killing our brave comrades on the front!" Trotsky shouted at the assembled crowd of workers on the warehouse floor. "The Poles are on the offensive, because they know our transport system is broken and we can't get mecha reinforcements where they're need in time. That changes now." Trotsky went on to outline a dramatic increase in the workers' hours and pace. As he wound down his speech, someone pushed to the front of the throng and loudly objected to the plan.

Hoping to get a better look at this interrupting figure, Trotsky pushed his round, wire-rimmed glasses up the bridge of his nose. "Who are you, comrade?" The man in question was wearing suspenders; the shirt underneath was covered in grease. He said he was the union representative for the warehouse. "Ah," Trotsky said, understanding. "Well, thank you for your services. We will appoint a new leader for this repair shop." Trotsky was prepared to exit the building, but this dismissal of the union figure provoked an audible ripple of displeasure through the crowd.

"Gentlemen," Trotsky said, turning back to the group. "We are in the midst of a civil war. Capitalists the world over want to crush us like they did the Communards fifty years ago in France. I'm afraid that for Russian workers it will get worse before it gets better. That's just the terrible reality." With that, he walked out of the building, his military entourage in tow. Under Trotsky's tight grip the Soviet railways were soon repaired.

It was in the wake of this success that he exceeded the mandate granted him by Lenin. Speaking before a congress of trade unions, Trotsky admitted — happily it seemed — that he would seek the dismissal of union leaders in any industry who considered the needs of their membership before those of the revolution as a whole. He was quoted saying so in Pravda, and when the story ran Lenin summoned him to his office in the Kremlin.

When Trotsky arrived there the next day, Lenin stood before a beverage cart, stirring coconut-milk creamer into his coffee with a metal spoon. Grigory Zinoviev sat in one of the pair of wooden chairs before Lenin's desk, eating a warm bublik, fresh from the oven, and slathered with soy-cream cheese. Zinoviev was, among other things, chairman of the Third International. Upon hearing Trotsky enter, both men turned and greeted him genially. Lenin inquired whether he had eaten breakfast, but Trotsky was well aware this was not a social call, and asked the Soviet leader as politely as he could manage to get to the point.

Lenin sighed, and in placing his mug on his desk, spilled a touch of coffee on the day's edition of Pravda. Trotsky couldn't help but notice the paper was open to an article featuring continued coverage of Trotsky's comments before the congress of trade unions. "Comrade, the Central Committee is going to have to distance itself from you, because of your statements," Lenin said, motioning to Pravda. "In the current period, the most important thing is reasserting worker democracy in the labor unions. I'm appointing Zinoviev to head up a commission to see that this is accomplished."

From his chair, Zinoviev smiled at Trotsky, simultaneously appearing pleased and apologetic. Lenin continued, "Going forward, the Central Committee requires that you not make public comments regarding the relationship of unions to the government. Do you think you can manage that?" Fuming, Trotsky chewed his lip, but nodded eventually. Lenin walked out from behind his desk and clapped him on the back. "You're a good soldier," the Soviet leader said. Placing the remainder of his bublik on a platter, Zinoviev rose and formally shook Trotsky's hand.

In early March of 1921, Trotsky travelled nearby to Kronstadt, a Russian naval fort in the Gulf of Finland. An uprising had broken out there, led by anarchist sailors, who demanded free elections to the Soviets, among other things. The Politbureau had voted to subdue the rebellion with force. After having spent years marshaling his mechas against genuine counterrevolutionaries who sought to reestablish the old order, it felt undeniably strange for Trotsky to prepare militarily against those who had been his comrades just a few years prior. And yet that's exactly what he did.

He established a makeshift center for military operations in a ramshackle building in Petrograd, about 25 miles from Kronstadt. The building was humming with activity, but Trotsky and Glazman had shut themselves away in a comparatively-quiet office on the second floor, heated by a wood-burning stove. Glazman sat in a chair, smoking his pipe, while Trotsky paced about the room, as was his habit when deep in thought. "Take this down," Trotsky said to his stenographer. "To the rebels of Kronstadt: surrender immediately or face the full force of the Red Army. In the absence of such a concession, 30,000 loyal Bolsheviks and 500 mecha will flatten your irresponsible uprising prior to the thaw of the ice route to Kronstadt. There will be no further warnings."

Gritting his pipe between his teeth, Glazman scribbled onto a notepad furiously, trying to keep up with the dictation of his superior. Trotsky paused before his desk and bit into a bitter green apple. “How does the telegram sound?” Trotsky asked, after he finished chewing. Glazman nodded approvingly. “It’s strong and clear,” he said. “I’ll send it out tonight.”

The leaders of the rebellion never responded. So in a few days, Trotsky ordered the Red Army to take the naval fortress. Only light mecha, generally used for scouting expeditions, were deployed, as Trotsky feared the larger, more heavily-armed models would fall through the ice. As it was, the machines involved in the assault were kept well away from the infantry units. That way, if the mecha did break through, they would not take additional men with them.

As the Red Army approached Kronstadt, the rebels showered them with gunfire. Wave after wave of Trotsky’s troops were killed as bullets pierced their flesh and cracked open the ice beneath them. Countless Bolshevik infantrymen drowned. And scores of mecha sank into the watery depths; their operators scrambling to escape the leaden weights dragging them downward. But the Red Army was relentless and had numbers on its side. On March 17, a mecha equipped with a battering ram smashed down the Kronstadt gates. Trotsky’s soldiers poured inside the fortress, slaughtered the remaining rebels, and the mutiny was put to rest.

A few days later, Trotsky participated in a victory parade through the city’s streets. Bundled in a heavy winter coat made of faux fur, Glazman was beside him. The Kronstadt residents, who watched the long stream of Bolshevik soldiers and mecha march past their houses, looked angry and haggard. Trotsky seemed determined not to notice the hostility of the populace. “I wish you wouldn’t wear that mock-Romanov jacket,” Trotsky said to his assistant. “It glamorizes speciesism.” Glazman shrugged.

For some blocks, the pair walked silently within the parade formation before Trotsky appeared willing to discuss what was truly on his mind. “So much has changed here since 1917,” Trotsky said, speaking of Kronstadt almost wistfully. “It was a hotbed for the revolution. Every time I came, the sailors gave me a hero’s welcome. And now…” He rambled off. Glazman looked at his superior’s face, which seemed to betray deep, emotional conflict. The stenographer wondered: could Trotsky, the fiery orator, the steely defender of the revolution, be having doubts? It appeared so.

“What does a working-class revolution do when it loses support of the working class?” Trotsky asked pensively, as if speaking only to the cold breeze. “It seems to me that you either give up power and the gains of the revolution, or you hold onto them both tightly and trust the working class will come back around and you’re operating in their best interests. I don’t see another way.” They continued walking in silence until Glazman couldn’t stand it any longer. “But the rebels didn’t want to give

up the gains of the revolution," the stenographer said.

Fitfully, Trotsky adjusted the budenovka hat upon his head. "No, they didn't," he conceded. "But do you think the anarchists could run this country? Do you think they could have won the civil war? No one but the Bolsheviks could have held Russia together. Our revolution is the greatest socialist-animalist experiment in history, and we have a duty to see it continues, whatever it takes." Glazman mulled this over as the parade wound through the streets of Kronstadt. Was Trotsky trying to convince him, Glazman wondered, or himself?

On an early-April evening in 1922, Trotsky had settled in for the night at his family's apartment in the Kavalersky building. His wife Natalia Sedov sat in an armchair, reading a history of Jainism, while their two teenage sons sat cross-legged on the floor, hunched over a game chess. Trotsky was adding a log to the fire, when there was a knock at the door. "I've got it," Trotsky said pleasantly, before Sedov could get up. At the door was Lenin, who lived with his own wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, down the hall.

"Comrade, I'm sorry to disturb you," the Soviet leader said. "Can we talk?" Trotsky nodded, waved reassuringly to his family, and stepped into the corridor, shutting the door behind him. With his hands stuffed in his pockets, he waited for Lenin to continue. "I'd like to make you deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars," the Soviet leader said.

Trotsky was not pleased with this idea, as under it he would be one of three vice-premiers. "You want to put me on the same level as Rykov and Tsuropa?" Trotsky asked incredulously, referring to the heads of the Commissar of Supplies and the Supreme Council of National Economy, who he regarded as lesser revolutionaries. "Meanwhile, Comrade Stalin has all the real power as general secretary of the party!" Lenin, realizing that Trotsky's pride had been wounded, insisted that Trotsky would, despite appearances, be his genuine second in command. "Absolutely not," Trotsky said, storming back to his apartment. "I won't take the post." He slammed the door behind him.

Approximately a month and a half later, Trotsky sat at his desk in the family apartment. He was poring over a progress report of the Soviet sterilization plan for cattle, jotting his own notes in the margins, when Sedov entered the study, holding a telegram. "Have you heard the news?" His wife asked. Trotsky hadn't; he shook his head. "Lenin suffered a stroke," Sedov said mournfully. "He's partially paralyzed on his right side." Trotsky was dumbstruck.

Trotsky was finally allowed to visit Lenin at the Moscow hospital four days later. Propped up by a pile of pillows, the Soviet leader lay in bed. Krupskaya sat in a nearby chair. She was attempting to dab a small amount of soy yogurt mixed with birch syrup into Lenin's mouth when Trotsky entered the room. Lenin grimaced in what one must assume was an attempt at a grin while Krupskaya stood to greet

Trotsky.

“Thank you for coming, comrade,” Krupskaya said. “I know he wanted to see you. He still can’t speak, but if he really focuses, he can write for short stretches of time.” Trotsky squeezed her hands in a way he intended to express his sympathy and support. Krupskaya offered a pained smile, before turning back to her husband and asking if he needed anything. Lenin shook his head as best he could and Krupskaya left the room.

Trotsky sat down in the chair beside the Soviet leader’s bed. “I’m so sorry this happened,” Trotsky said. Lenin motioned toward the pad and paper on his beside table. Trotsky retrieved these and placed them on the Soviet leader’s lap. So they began the tedious process of communicating. Lenin was in a gloomy mood; he believed his death was near. Half an hour later, Krupskaya returned with a doctor, who asked Trotsky to leave so the Soviet leader might rest.

In July of 1922, Trotsky and his family visited Lenin and Krupskaya in Gorki, a locality situated a few miles outside the city limits of Moscow. Lenin had been released from the hospital on the condition he dramatically curtail his work load. So he’d retreated to a palatial estate in Gorki which had been socialized during the revolution. Krupskaya and Sedov shared drinks in the living room. The children played outside while Lenin, who had recovered most of his faculties, and Trotsky watched from a porch bench.

“I’d still like you to take the vice-premier position,” the Soviet leader said eventually. “It will create a good counterbalance to Comrade Stalin’s power as general secretary, if anything happens to me.” Trotsky sighed in frustration. “Can’t we talk about something else?” Trotsky asked. “It’s a beautiful afternoon. The doctors say you’re not supposed to worry so much about these things now.” But Lenin wouldn’t accept this. The discussion was important, the Soviet leader insisted. “You could use the post to take on the bureaucratic misconduct you are always complaining about,” Lenin said enticingly.

Trotsky snorted. “The problem is the misconduct originates from the general secretary,” he said. “You can’t take it on so long as he’s in charge.” Lenin hushed him, shaking his head. “I wish you wouldn’t let your personal animosity towards Comrade Stalin cloud your judgement,” the Soviet leader said in disappointment. “He’s a vital part of what we’re accomplishing here and I rely on him.”

The issue of Trotsky’s appointment to vice-premier was raised again at a Politbureau meeting in mid-September of that year. The group met in the Kremlin, outside of which a construction mecha was loudly demolishing a slaughterhouse which had, prior to the revolution, operated on behalf of the inhabitants of the fortified compound. Every so often, the gathering of the Soviet leadership was forced to temporarily pause discussion, as they couldn’t hear each other over the sound of crashing bricks and wood.

Sitting at the head of the table, Stalin smoked a pipe, and flipped through a stack of papers before him. “The next order of business is filling the position of deputy chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars,” he said acidly. “The Politbureau should know that Comrade Lenin telegraphed me — from his sick bed — asking that Trotsky be given this post. So, whatever I or others might think of the choice, I move that we honor Lenin’s request.”

Those seated around the table turned to Trotsky, who was eating a plate of vegan pelmeni. “As I’ve made clear, I can’t take the position,” Trotsky said impatiently. “I’m scheduled soon for a vacation and am swamped with work in preparation for the next congress of the International.” Outside the Kremlin’s walls, the construction mecha sifted through the debris of the former abbattoir.

Stalin struck a match to relight his pipe. “Those are just excuses,” the general secretary said, before dipping the flame onto the packed tobacco. “This isn’t meant to be a temporary appointment. The job will still be here when your vacation and work for the congress is done.” Trotsky glared at Stalin, who, he was sure, knew from the outset Trotsky would not take the position. The general secretary smiled back, as if chummily. Trotsky reiterated that he would not take the post.

Stalin turned to the rest of the Politbureau, trying to hide the pleasure this result gave him. “In that case, I move that the Politbureau officially censure Comrade Trotsky for dereliction of duty,” the general secretary said in a regretful tone. Trotsky gritted his teeth and forced himself to swallow the remainder of the pelmeni in his mouth. “All in favor?” Stalin asked. Everyone present, except for Trotsky, raised their hands. Trotsky fumed.

A week into December of 1922, Trotsky received a telegram from Krupskaya saying that Lenin sought his presence in Gorki. So the next day, Trotsky headed to the outskirts of Moscow where the semi-retired Soviet leader lived. It was a beautiful afternoon. The landscape was buried in snow but the temperature was warm enough that Trotsky stuffed his hat and pleather gloves away in his pockets. When he reached the entrance of the mansion, Krupskaya answered the door. With obvious frustration, she said that, ignoring the advice of his doctors, Lenin was in the nearby forest, harvesting firewood in a lumber mecha.

Following a trail of compacted snow, Trotsky found the machine and its operator half a mile away. Struggling with the mecha’s controls from a pilot seat twenty feet off the ground, Lenin guided the robot’s sawing arm back and forth across the base of a thick balsam poplar. “Comrade Lenin,” Trotsky yelled. It took a few more shouts like this for the Soviet leader to hear him over the sound of the machine. But finally he waved in acknowledgement. Lenin lowered his chair to the ground and shut down the mecha.

After unbuckling himself and standing up, Lenin shook Trotsky’s hand. “It’s good to

see you, comrade," the Soviet leader said. Trotsky asked Lenin about his health and castigated him for not listening to his doctors, before they got down to business. "You know how I feel about the vice-premier position," Lenin said. "There's nothing new there. I just hope you might reconsider the offer in light of what I have to say."

The Soviet leader continued, explaining that he had been following Stalin's actions through Pravda and accounts provided by visitors to Gorki. Lenin had come to the conclusion that Trotsky was right. The general secretary was amassing too much power and often used it in an unprincipled way. "At this point, I'm prepared to offer whatever help I can in my present condition to root out the bureaucracy," the Soviet leader said. "I'd like to form an alliance with you on the matter." Trotsky was surprised by Lenin's apparently sudden change in perspective, but happy about it. He readily agreed.

A week later, Trotsky was in Vladivostok, which had only been taken by the Red Army in October, inspecting its newly established animal sanctuary, built just outside the city. Trotsky walked the grounds with the facility's director. "I'd like to see the indoor shelters expanded," Trotsky said. "The living quarters for the goats in particular seem too small." At this point, his assistant Glazman interrupted, announcing the news that had arrived by telegram. Lenin had suffered a second stroke.

In early March of 1923, Lev Kamenev, another member of the Politbureau, met with Trotsky in a Moscow restaurant, mostly frequented by English-speaking expatriates, called 'Oswald's' after the Scottish Jacobin and animalist. While taking their orders, their waiter was starstruck upon recognizing Trotsky, who waved off the man's praise politely. Kamenev went unnoticed but didn't seem troubled by this. Kamenev was a quiet, bookish revolutionary. Further, Trotsky suspected that, due to political tensions, he did not want this meeting between them to be known by others on the Politbureau.

After the waiter retreated to the kitchen to communicate their order of two vegan pizzas, Kamenev began. "Lenin has severed all personal and political ties to Comrade Stalin," Kamenev said, referring to the Soviet leader who, after his most recent stroke, was confined to a wheelchair. "Apparently, Stalin insulted his wife, Krupskaya." As Kamenev explained, Lenin had dictated a letter to Krupskaya for Trotsky, in violation of his doctor's injunction against political work. When Stalin heard this, he confronted Krupskaya, angrily calling her a 'syphilictic whore,' among other things.

"I think he's worried you're forming some kind of bloc with Lenin," Kamenev said. "You wouldn't be up to anything like that, would you?" Trotsky shrugged; Lenin wasn't much use bundled up in Gorki anyway. Kamenev nodded, and finally the Politbureau members' pizzas arrived. Kamenev folded a soy-cheese slice in half and took a large bite. "Wow, this is good," he exclaimed as grease dripped onto his beard. A few days later, Lenin suffered a third stroke which left him bedridden and mute.

In late April, Stalin was reelected as general secretary of the party at the annual congress of Bolsheviks. Trotsky did not oppose him. A week later, in early May, Trotsky and his assistant were out for a walk through Moscow, as the pair sought to clear their heads, having read reports of mecha readiness all morning. Trotsky pulled the brim of his cap low on his face in the hopes of not being recognized. Glazman struggled to keep up with his superior's aggressive pace.

"I don't understand why you didn't move against Stalin at the conference," Glazman said, huffing and puffing. "You could have crushed him. People were complaining about a lack of inner-party democracy. You had Lenin's backing." Trotsky sighed heavily and kicked a stone down the sidewalk. "I'm not sure if you are aware of this," he said sarcastically, "but Comrade Lenin can't get out of bed, let alone speak. He hasn't been to a Politbureau meeting in some time."

This wouldn't suffice for Glazman. But Trotsky had Lenin's letters on the matter, the stenographer insisted; he could have reproduced them. However Trotsky still felt an unspoken loyalty to the Politbureau that held him back from publicly criticizing its other members. "Glazman, the revolution is in a supremely fragile state with Comrade Lenin ill," Trotsky said, as they walked past a bakery. "Now's not the time for division. Plus, everyone seems to suspect that I'm pining for Lenin's position. And I don't want to encourage that impression. It's unseemly."

Trotsky and Glazman sidestepped past a small mecha that was sprinkling dirt on the still icy sidewalks to provide pedestrians with traction. Trotsky nodded in acknowledgement to the operator, who had paused her work so as not to spray the pair with earth. Glazman seemed to be losing patience with his boss. "But you know Stalin has no such compunction," the assistant said. "He's been using his position to sack local and regional secretaries and replace them with those loyal to him. It's only a matter of time until you are completely isolated."

In October of 1923, the director of the political police, Felix Dzerzhinsky, spoke before a session of the Politbureau. During the civil war, Dzerzhinsky was infamous for employing machine-gun mecha for the mass execution of counterrevolutionaries. His comrades generally acknowledged the necessity of his work, but found it unsettling. Following a strike wave and calls for greater Soviet democracy, Dzerzhinsky was now asking the Politbureau to order Bolsheviks to report other party members who were hostile to the leadership.

"Look, you want me to quash the discontent?" Dzerzhinsky said. "You want me to arrest those fomenting it? Well, this is the tool I need. I question party members — even the Old Guard — and they refuse to give up any names. They're sympathetic. I think this is a bigger problem than you're aware."

Later, in the Kavalersky building, while his wife and two sons slept in the adjoining rooms, Trotsky began to write a critical response to Dzerzhinsky's request. That the

Politbureau would even have to consider such a draconian measure was a mark of how out of touch the Bolshevik leadership had become with the masses. No doubt others on the Politbureau would point out Trotsky had overturned trade-union leadership in the period of War Communism. But Stalin's actions were on a completely different scale, and besides, the civil war was over, Trotsky thought, gazing out into the Moscow night.

A week after Trotsky submitted his Dzerzhinsky response to the Central Committee, in mid-October of 1923, the same body received a statement signed by 46 Bolshevik leaders condemning the bureaucratization of the party and calling for increased internal democracy. While Trotsky was not one of the piece's signatories, it was suspiciously similar in its wording to many of the criticisms he had made, so he was called before an allied group within the Politbureau made up of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev.

They met in a Kremlin conference room. The trio sat on one side of the table and Trotsky was on the other. "Come clean, Comrade Trotsky," Zinoviev said accusingly. "Did you organize this?" Trotsky shook his head. That much was true. He had known the salvo was coming and certainly did nothing to dissuade those who wrote it. But he didn't orchestrate the thing's creation. Zinoviev leaned in toward Trotsky. "You know it would be a violation of party discipline if you had, right?" He asked.

"I didn't do it," Trotsky insisted flatly. Zinoviev fell back in his pleather chair in frustration, as Kamenev seemed to silently implore Trotsky not to mention their meeting at Oswald's. Stalin chewed an apple while glaring at Trotsky with a look of pure hatred. Finally, the general secretary turned to Zinoviev. "We can't sweep this under the rug," Stalin grumbled. "The party members who signed the statement are too prominent and respected. What if, in a gesture of good will, we temporarily opened the Bolshevik papers to debate?" Kamenev gasped. It was a bold proposition. "After three years without it?" Zinoviev asked. "It will be a madhouse." Stalin shrugged. He didn't see any other solution.

In early December, in an effort to blow off steam, Trotsky and Glazman spent a day at the Red Army's mecha shooting range outside Moscow. Trotsky operated a scouting mecha and was doing the firing, while his assistant managed a construction robot, retrieving the thick logs they used as targets after his superior knocked them down. Both machines were over two-stories high. "If you want the trio to continue down this road of increased democracy and freedom of expression, you have to keep applying pressure," Glazman yelled, as he maneuvered his mecha's pincers around a slab of wood, riddled with bullet holes, and placed it atop a boulder. "I think you need to write an open letter, explaining your position, to all the party meetings in the country."

The stenographer directed his machine backward, trudging through a deep snow bank. He signaled Trotsky when he was safely out of the line of fire. From the pilot seat, tucked into the scouting robot's midsection, Trotsky adjusted his control stick

before pulling the trigger, releasing a barrage of machine-gun fire. The log was instantly slammed off its perch, exploding in shards of bark and dust. “The Politbureau would accuse me of breaking rank and who knows what else,” Trotsky said hesitantly. “It would get ugly.” Glazman couldn’t disagree there.

The initial reaction to Trotsky’s open letter, in which he demanded more power and freedom for rank-and-file party members, was overwhelming. Glazman came to the apartment, while Trotsky was still eating breakfast with Sedov and their children, to show his superior the large stack of supportive telegrams. “This one’s from the director of the Soviet Animal Sanctuary of Petrograd!” The stenographer exclaimed gleefully, holding a piece of paper aloft. “And this one’s from the Red Army’s chief political commissar!”

But the response from Zinoviev, Stalin, and Kamenev came the next day in a piece the trio coauthored in Pravda. As Trotsky expected, they accused him of hypocrisy and irresponsible individualism, among other things. Huddled by the newsstand nearest the Kavalersky building, he shook with cold as his wife read aloud the relevant sections of the morning paper. “‘Trotsky, the voice of the omnivorous petty-bourgeois, engaged in no such handwringing about democratic rights when Comrade Lenin banned opposition parties and Bolshevik factions during the civil war,’” Sedov repeated. “‘He’s merely frustrated that the Politbureau has blocked him from playing the role of Bonaparte in our Marxist-animalist revolution.’”

In early January of 1924, Sedov insisted her husband see a doctor. Stalin and his countless government appointees had been publicly condemning Trotsky for nearly a month, and she worried he was sinking into a depression. The physician who saw Trotsky recommended he take a holiday to the sea-side resort in Sukhum, where he could escape the cold and political furor of Moscow. “I hear they make fantastic Mimosas,” the doctor said, while Sedov nodded encouragingly. Trotsky was reluctant to go, as it would mean missing the Bolshevik’s thirteenth party congress. But, exhausted by the controversy surrounding him, he agreed. On January 18, Trotsky boarded a train for the Caucasian Coast of the Black Sea.

N&LC member talks species politics

Daniel Read is affiliated with the News and Letters Committees, a socialist organization founded in 1955. He recently agreed to an interview in which he discussed his conception of anti-speciesist leftism.

Jon Hochschartner: How would you describe your economic politics? Are you a socialist? Would you consider yourself a Marxist, anarchist, social democrat or something else?

Daniel Read: I’m most certainly a Marxist, although at the risk of sounding pretentious I’d qualify that in specifying allegiance to the more humanistic side of Marx. So Marxist-Humanist is likely the correct term.

JH: Can you describe what involvement, if any, you've had with the organized socialist or anarchist left?

DR: Well I'm currently 31 and have been involved in left politics, to one extent or another, since I was about eighteen. Initially I was a member of the Utopian-orientated Socialist Party of Great Britain, although in retrospect that was a youthful reaction to observing the rather empty-headed "activism for the sake of activism" ethos of more sizable groups such as the Socialist Workers Party, which at that time was very much the first port of call for those looking to get a taste of political dissent, despite how unhealthy and problematic that organisation turned out to be. I subsequently found a home in several other groups such as the Communist Party of Great Britain and the International Marxist Tendency, although in the case of the latter I was compelled to leave due to that group's rather extreme attitude towards factionalism and internal democracy. As such I'm, unsurprisingly, affiliated to a group known as the News and Letters Committees, which is primarily based in the US, and ascribes to the Marxist Humanism prolifically espoused by one of its founders,Raya Dunayevskaya.

JH: How have your views regarding animals been received on the socialist or anarchist left?

DR: It's usually met with indifference, although a hostile reception is not unknown. I've come across the idea that the concept of animal rights is "petty-bourgeois", although this term is so heavily and abstracted employed as a method of abuse on the left that it often means essentially nothing. Generally my political stance towards animals and agriculture, as well as my ethical perspective on the consumption of meat/diary, is seen as just a personal lifestyle choice – like my penchant for wearing high-collared jackets – which is actually rather depressing.

JH: Does your organization have any official position on animal exploitation of any kind? If not, is this something you would like to change? If so, how might you do this?

DR: I think there is some potential here, although as such N&LC does not appear to have any official position on animals, agriculture and so forth. I'd very much like us to develop some kind of orientation towards such issues, given that we generally have a very open organisational praxis. Generally when one enters a political organisation you necessarily find that there is no clean slate when it comes to the ideas and prejudice that necessarily builds up within a population often in receipt of some form of net benefit from the operations of imperialism. I'm not saying this is what's happening in my group, in fact what I had in mind is the more extreme occurrences that I know of within British Trotskyism – the recent scandals regarding rape accusations and general sexism in the SWP comes to mind – but one thing I have come across is that just because somebody believes in revolutionary objectives in the abstract doesn't necessarily mean they are willing to practice such

a thing in the concrete.

I'm thinking again of my experience in other organisations, where what'd you see is a very "top down" relationship between rank and file members and the leadership, which often liked to think of itself as some kind of intellectual elite (and would frame arguments as such) yet would practice distinctly reactionary methods in the day to day course of running an organisation. I think the point I'm trying to make is that it's very easy to say you want to change the world when change is still a long way off, and your commitment to that change remains purely in the realm of rhetoric. Ascribing to the moral notion that animal life has inherent worth requires some form of immediate commitment in terms of the choices you make each day, and you'll often find that's something people find problematic, even when they regard themselves as a "revolutionary".

JH: Is there any way in which speciesism is used to further human class exploitation? If so, how?

DR: What I find happens is that the violence enacted upon animals reflects back onto us in a distinctly moral and political sense; people become accustomed to having violence inflicted upon others for their own benefit, and psychologically they externalize that suffering through the act of objectifying the suffering subject as being outside of the sphere of moral concern i.e "they deserve it," "it's just an animal", "they're terrorists" or, a more extreme example in terms of imbecility "they shouldn't have blown up the twin towers" and so forth.

And it doesn't stop at animals; it most certainly is not the case that those living in an imperialist nation, such as the UK, will suddenly freak out in absolute moral indignation at the ongoing behavior of this country and the suffering engendered by our foreign policy. We ignore it and trivialize it in much the same way we ignore and trivialize the pieces of hacked up animals lining our shopping basket. If a population accrues a certain material benefit from an exploitative practice it will often display a remarkable degree of moral hypocrisy when challenged on such a front; the common retort of "I like eating meat, it tastes nice, who cares about animals" is often accompanied by an equally callous opinion on the plight of, say, Bangladeshi garment workers who will have likely labored to clothe the fine individual expressing such opinions.

What's more, the absurd amount of meat demanded by populations in the imperialist centers directly impacts upon the lives of those in the peripheries of the global economy. Land seizures, land clearances, destruction of natural environments to make way for cattle grazing and so forth, plays a serious role in the destruction of indigenous economies and the reshaping of internal markets, or their outright annihilation as is often the case. An interesting comparison can be drawn here between the potato blight that impacted upon much of Europe in the middle of the 19th century – the native Irish were by and large expected to subsist, and did subsist, on a largely plant-based diet, potatoes of course, and continue to export

produce, including animal products, to the imperialist center, Great Britain. Yet given that the Irish agricultural economy had largely been reworked precisely to satisfy the import demands of the British ruling class (with Irish landowners of course in tow) this economic relationship had little regard for the material well being of the native population. This isn't something that has just vanished, and it's not surprising at all that nation's with a sizable amount of "food insecurity" continue to export agricultural produce, including dead animals, as part of a subservient relationship to the global north that is strikingly similar to the Irish-British dynamic of the 19th century.

JH: How would you respond to the suggestion that personal veganism is an individualistic solution to a systemic problem? Or that insisting on personal veganism as a baseline for animal activism is the equivalent of saying anyone who drives a car can't be opposed to fossil fuel economies, or anyone who wears Nike can't be opposed to sweatshops?

DR: Potentially, yes it is, although I'd say that "personal veganism" is often the beginning of a valuable attempt to grapple with fundamental questions regarding oppression, resistance and emancipation. It doesn't always go this way, in fact I've come across some vegans who will honestly state that they care nothing for humans, even when witnessing horrific suffering on the part of sentient beings that just happen to be homo sapiens. This is obviously more a position entertained by the psychologically deranged, although it must be said that sometimes it's a product of a general attempt to withdraw from a reality irrefutably stamped with human activity – an activity which, of course, is often intensely unsettling – and seek refuge in kind of deification of the natural world that flies in the face of reality.

Veganism itself, however, is something I find to be politically and ethically revolutionary in potential, for reasons already stated in terms of economics and imperialism, but also in the simple capacity to empathise. Capitalism is not an empathetic system; it directly chips away at human beings in a multitude of ways, dragging everything down to the commodity relation and a simple interaction between buyer and seller, regardless of what horrors are spawned in the process. Veganism can cut around that, allowing people to take hold of personal ethics in their day to day existence and abstain from participating in a dynamic that views oppression and death as routine, or actually desirable if you can make money from it. In that respect veganism can be deeply empowering, yet again in potential it can only prove "revolutionary" once we expand that "ethic of caring", for lack of a better term, into the political sphere. As to whether this is akin to claiming that you can only be concerned about fossil fuels by refusing to drive, I would say there is obviously a connection there, but in terms of the scale of suffering prompted by a carnist diet each and every day, I'd say there is a quantitative difference here.

JH: Is a vegan capitalism possible? Why or why not?

DR: Potentially, although I find it unlikely that such a thing will ever exist. Outlets

selling veganism as a "lifestyle choice" often do very well financially, Whole Foods for instance, yet even these establishments will quite happily sell butchered animals alongside their "ethical" produce. It's the case that veganism can be accommodated well enough within the system, assuming the individual vegan adopts the peculiar "I hate humans" mindset already mentioned and is perfectly happy to respect animals yet participate in a system that harms people. This is certainly possible, but only if one removes the revolutionary potential inherit in sympathising with those who are the most helpless, the most vulnerable, and indeed often the most exploited and affronted by the operation of the capitalist system, those of course being animals. I find it hard to imagine, for instance, the US having an entirely vegan population yet not changing in a very real, very fundamental way in regards to attitudes towards racial minorities, women, the environment and, of course, it's role in the global economy. For hundreds of millions of people to make a moral decision to value the lives of pigs and cows yet maintain the same psychotic disconnect when it comes to the peoples of the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the abomination of nuclear weapons is, in my view, pretty unlikely.

JH: Jason Hribal has argued animals should be considered part of the proletariat. Bob Torres has said such a definition obscures the difference in revolutionary potential between animal and human laborers, and that animals are in fact superexploited living commodities. Where do you stand in the debate?

DR: Super-exploited living commodities is, off the top of my head, the term I would prefer to use, given that, to a Marxist, the proletariat necessarily sells its labor power to capital for the purpose of accumulating surplus value. This is obviously something that only humans are able to do, and so for the sake of clarity I'd prefer to avoid describing animals as part of the proletariat, although no doubt Hribal frames the argument with some sophistication that I'm probably not being entirely fair to.

As such I would stand with Torres, as animals occupy the frightening position of not just being viewed as commodities when they are alive, as human labor power is also, but of having their physical bodies intimately tied to the use value inherent in their status as a commodity. You could argue humans may experience a similar degradation, women in prostitution in particular quite literally sell their bodies to the predations of others, yet with animals it's something very specific where their manifestation as a commodity involves their physical annihilation. The lines are necessarily blurred, however, what with the alarming proliferation of human trafficking and the literal murder and dismemberment of human victims by organ traders, but in terms of scale and frequency animals constitute "living commodities" in a manner far removed from the experience of most humans.

JH: British socialist Richard Seymour has said the relationship between animals and humans in Marxism is under theorized. Do you agree? If so, what areas are particularly lacking?

DR: I'm actually surprised Seymour said this, given his admitted penchant for Louis

Althusser and all the joys that come with that. I'd have to learn more about the context in which Seymour argued this, although at a glance I'd certainly agree. As to how and why such a relationship is "under theorized" I'd have to say there are a number of factors, although the moral disconnect that "First World" populations have when it comes to the consequences of their lifestyles and politics certainly plays a role.

The reduction of any and all beings to the status of a commodity is undeniably a prime cause. Even Marxists will quite happily fawn over a cute kitten obtained like any other salable item yet then, ten minutes later, purchase and consume the flesh of a cow. Animals as "living commodities" vary in the nature of their utility the same way any other commodity – a car, chair, hat etc – does, but where as a chair owes it's entire non-sentient existence to human activity, a "food" animal only manifests its use value through the destruction of it's own agency – literally in most cases – and as such the entire process takes on a directly oppressive, often murderous character. Why this is not more obvious I have no idea, but a potential cause among the left in particular is the human-centric focus on which Marx and Engels based much of their writings. As we both know Engels in particular had an incredibly unsettling attitude to animals, and I hardly think it's "revisionist" or "petty bourgeois" to distance ourselves from that. It is interesting though in that Marx came fairly close to the absurdity of how capitalism treats both humans and animals when it came to England and the question of land enclosures, as in the human population in rural areas becoming depleted – largely to provide cheap labor in the cities -, but also to make way for…sheep farms. Marx spits some venom at the bourgeoisie here, but obviously doesn't make that qualitative leap in terms of analyzing the extreme and deliberate proliferation of animal life as "living commodities".

It's hard to be looney on the "looney left"

I'm a socialist and an animal-rights advocate. I also live with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

After hearing about my mental health challenges, a typical reactionary comment might be: "Well, I should have known you were a nut from your politics!" (Of course, the joke's funny because one would have to be crazy to support an egalitarian society or to oppose killing animals for gustatory preference.) The fear of having my perspective easily dismissed in this way is one factor that has, in the past, led me to delay and sometimes altogether avoid getting the

psychological support I need.

Those who are outside the mainstream are frequently pathologized. And because those on the far left of a particular issue are, by definition, outside the mainstream, it's no surprise that pejoratives used against progressives are often couched in terms of mental illness. One hears phrases like "the looney left" all the time on right-

wing radio, for instance. Thus a situation is created in which radicals who suffer from psychological problems are reluctant to admit their trouble for fear of confirming conservative criticism that their politics are not based on principle but on mental instability.

Progressive writers, while respectful of mental-health issues, seem all too aware of the potential unwanted implications that leftists with psychological trouble would represent. I'm very, very far from an Encyclopedia Brown of socialism or animal rights. But I've read a bit. And off the top of my head, I can't think of a single significant radical figure who has been identified as suffering from psychological

trouble. This is surprising, even assuming those who rise to leadership positions are least likely to be those in mental distress, given what we known about the frequency of mental health problems in the general population.

I can only assume a history of women and men working for change with the burden of mental health problems exists, but progressives choose to not to discuss it for fear the left is at the moment so weak it can't bear the additional stigma. Whether this realpolitik is justifiable in today's conservative climate, I don't know. But it has been unhelpful for me and I imagine many others.

The potential of leftists with mental health problems having their politics pathologized is quite real. I experienced this during the breakdown that led to my diagnosis with OCD intrusive thoughts. To be fair, this was done less by mental-health professionals and more by my family, who believed they were acting in my best interest.

To understand this, one must know a little bit about scrupulosity, which is often described as "OCD plus religion." The classic sufferer might repeat a prayer thousands of times a day in the hope of thinking or saying it in just the "right" way. The Catholic Church has long been aware of this destructive phenomenon of hyper-morality and one could speculate that significant figures, such as the founder of the Jesuits, who confessed petty sins unceasingly for hours and couldn't bear to step on pieces of straw that formed a cross, as he feared doing so was blasphemous, were sufferers.

As our society has become more secular, psychiatrists are beginning to diagnose obsessive adherence to non-religious ideological systems as scrupulosity. And here's where it gets complicated. I believe at times I have been pathologically scrupulous in my commitment to socialism and animal rights. Now, this might give you the impression that I am or was some kind of perfect progressive. But that would be inaccurate and represent a misunderstanding of how OCD works.

First, scrupulous obsessions often focus on completely meaningless things, as shown by the example of avoiding the crossed straw. Second, OCD sufferers often avoid what triggers their obsessive thoughts because the mental and behavioral

compulsions associated with them are simply too exhausting.

For instance, most people would assume that those who engage in cleaning rituals have immaculate houses. This isn't always the case. Sometimes their hygienic compulsions become so burdensome they will allow their living spaces to degenerate into squalor rather than engage their obsessions.

"If something dropped on the floor I couldn't pick it up again," one poster on OCDForums.org relates. "If I did pick it up I went into cleaning compulsions."

In a similar way, at various times in the past I have avoided politics altogether, often moving intentionally in reactionary directions, because I knew from experience that engaging with progressive thought could bring me to create arbitrary, hyper-moral, and increasingly restrictive rules for myself that would eventually lead to a nervous breakdown.

But the difference between those with a religious scrupulosity and those with a leftist strand (such as mine) is that sufferers of the former are never counseled to give up religion altogether. Instead, they are encouraged to adopt a less draconian and more self-tolerating faith. I, on the other hand, was encouraged to avoid political activism completely. My family, for instance, discouraged me from publishing broad critiques of capitalism in our local newspaper and argued

with me when I decided to resume my veganism, which I had given up in the immediate wake of my breakdown. I don't blame them for this, especially considering the amount of heartache my turmoil put them through. But I think their position needs to be examined within a context of religious ideology today being mainstream and therefore sane, and socialist and animal rights ideology being outside the mainstream and thus potentially pathological.

OCD is often described as pathological intolerance of doubt. This can be seen in how I am most comfortable in being completely politically committed or, conversely, totally disengaged. I am uneasy in the uncertain middle ground that most of us belong to. It's going to be a long-term struggle for me to learn to tolerate that uneasiness and find balance, without either engaging in a self- destructive, impossible search for political perfection or abandoning my ideals entirely. Still, my OCD affects only my expression of my political ideals, not their essence.

I'm a socialist and an animal rights advocate with mental health challenges. My politics are not a symptom of my disorder.

We need new anti-speciesist imagery

I'd like to talk a little bit about the symbolism and imagery the animalist movement and its socialist and anarchist subsets use to represent themselves. Specifically, I'd like to examine the paw-and-fist design and the employment of green as an

emblematic color, both of which I find lacking.

Some may view this discussion as a little superficial. And to a degree, they'd be right. But I also genuinely believe this kind of symbolism and imagery is important. If it wasn't, capitalists wouldn't spend billions of dollars a year on advertising campaigns. So I'd argue we should learn from our enemies and consider these sorts of things with some amount of seriousness, as they have an effect.

So I'd like to look at the paw-and-fist design first. If you have spent even a brief amount of time in the animalist movement you are surely familiar with it. The design features what appears to be a dog's paw raised aloft, alongside a clenched human fist. This is often superimposed over a five-pointed star, which is associated with socialism. I'm not sure who originally came up with this design. If they happen to read this, I hope I don't offend them. But I'm not a big fan of this logo, even though it seems to be one of the more widely used symbols the animalist movement has produced.

My problems are with the paw. First, it appears to be that of a dog, beings that are generally exploited as companion animals. The socialist animalist Henry Stephens Salt argued, "The injustice done to the pampered lap-dog is as conspicuous, in its way, as that done to the over-worked horse, and both spring from one and the same origin—the fixed belief that the life of a 'brute' has no 'moral purpose,' no distinctive personality worthy of due consideration and development." I'm sympathetic to this.

That said, I often feel that as bad as pet ownership on the whole may be for dogs, in general it's not as bad as, say, animal agriculture is for chickens. Humans are socialized to view dogs with a greater degree of respect, little as it might be. Additionally, the population of beings exploited as food animals is exponentially larger than that used as companion animals. For these reasons, to me it seems opportunistic or just plain inaccurate to attempt to use a dog to represent the non-human struggle.

Beyond this quibble, the pose of the dog's paw just looks unnatural and anthropomorphic. One finds it hard to imagine a situation in which a dog would raise his paw in such a manner. It appears uncomfortable. And while the clenched fist is a recognized symbol of human resistance, an aloft paw has no such association. Were the dog to rebel against his human owner, a raised paw would presumably not be the form such resistance would take.

Now I'd like to move onto the color green as a symbol of anti-speciesism. Again, I'm not a big fan. If someone out there thought it up and I hurt their feelings here, I'm sorry. But I suspect this link arose more organically, with no one originator. One can see examples of the connection between the color and the ideology in designs such as that which features the word 'vegan' superimposed over a green star, or that which contains twin black and green flags surrounded by the words "anti-speciesist action."

Again, anti-capitalist symbolism, such as the five-pointed star of socialism and the black flag of anarchism, is evident. But both on the far left and in society more generally, green is associated with environmentalism, which is in no way popularly understood to be synonymous with anti-speciesism. However, perhaps we are not a large enough movement to 'claim' a color for ourselves, as socialism has done with red, anarchism has done with black, and environmentalism has done with green.

Socialist sheriff candidate Angela Walker discusses species politics

Angela N. Walker is running as an independent socialist for the office of sheriff in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. She recently agreed to an interview in which she discussed her campaign and perspective on animal issues.

Jon Hochschartner: Why are you running for the office of sheriff specifically?

Angela Walker: I am running for sheriff because Milwaukee needs a shift in the way things are addressed here. We are a city in need of a focus on social justice versus "lock 'em up and throw away the key." We need help here, and a different perspective. I believe I can be helpful.

JH: How would you describe your economic politics?

AW: I believe in planned economies where the needs of people are provided for without profit motive. I believe in workers being at the center of all work-related decision-making.

JH: Why should those concerned with the treatment of animals vote for you?

AW: My concern for the treatment of animals is reflected in purchases and decisions I make. I avoid buying things that were made by companies who conduct animal testing, as I view the practice as unnecessary cruelty. I will never support factory farming, animal testing, animal fighting, or any other form of abuse and exploitation. SeaWorld will never get me in. I think that all living things have a right to their lives and are entitled to respect even when grown for food. I'm not a strict vegetarian, but am primarily vegetarian. I think people who care about the treatment of animals can feel good about voting for me.

JH: In practical terms, if elected, how could you better the treatment of animals?

AW: I can use my platform to speak out against the exploitation and abuse of animals, and to advocate for their responsible and humane treatment in all areas. Wild spaces need to be left alone, habitats need to be respected. Human settlements need to be planned with environmental and animal impact in mind.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the fights for economic justice and better treatment for

animals intertwined?

AW: For me, economic and environmental justice are intertwined. We can not keep upsetting the balance of nature and its creatures and think all will be well for us as a species. A large part of caring for the environment is respecting the creatures who inhabit it, everywhere they are. This planet and its creatures do not exist for anyone's profit.

Animal exploitation in Hobbit production

Besides overseeing the creation of a remarkably dull film, from a Marxist-animalist perspective, the capitalists behind "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" were unusually brutal on their non-human workforce. As many as 27 animals involved in shooting — including horses, chickens, goats and sheep — were killed.

Based on a section of a 1937 novel by J.R.R. Tolkien, the film was released in 2012 and made over one billion dollars at the box office worldwide. According to The Hollywood Reporter, it was only the 15th film, not accounting for inflation, to pass this milestone.

Like the human actors, grips, and camera operators, the animals involved in the movie's production were laboring toward the creation of a commodity, an astoundingly profitable blockbuster. Unlike their human proletarian counterparts, however, the animals did not sell their labor power to Warner Bros. or related subcontractors under the pretense of free choice. Rather, the animals themselves were commodities. Their labor power was sold all at once, unlike the proletarians' whose labor power was sold to the studio or others in increments.

According to an Associated Press story, animal wranglers involved in the film "said the farm near Wellington was unsuitable for horses because it was peppered with bluffs, sinkholes and broken-down fencing. They said they repeatedly raised concerns about the farm with their superiors and the production company, owned by Warner Bros., but it continued to be used."

Animal wrangler Chris Langridge told the news agency that a horse named Rainbow had broken his back and was given a lethal injection as a result. Wrangler Johnny Smythe said a horse named Claire died after falling from a bluff. According to the Associated Press, "the six goats and six sheep [Smythe] buried died after falling into sinkholes, contracting worms or getting new feed after the grass was eaten. He said the chickens were often left out of their enclosure and that a dozen were mauled to death by dogs on two separate occasions."

So why weren't these hazards addressed? One must assume that the capitalists in charge of production hoped to increase the animals' surplus labor. Surplus labor is work over and above what's called 'necessary labor,' that used to create the equivalent of the animals' livelihood. The movie-industry capitalists might have

achieved this by making the animals produce absolute surplus value, which is obtained by increasing the overall amount of time laborers work in a particular period.

But in disregarding their animals' welfare, these capitalists were making their non-human labor force create relative surplus value. Relative surplus value is produced by the lowering the amount of work dedicated to necessary labor in proportion to that dedicated to surplus labor. So in choosing not to spend the money needed to create a safe environment, the capitalists were extracting a greater percentage of profits from their animals.

Ultimately, according to The Hollywood Reporter, the American Humane Society gave Peter Jackson's fantasy epic a passing grade on its treatment of animals, stating that the organization had "monitored all of the significant animal action. No animals were harmed during such action." This despite the fact Smythe tried to get the AHA to investigate the animal deaths incurred by production of "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey."

Again, according to The Hollywood Reporter, "An AHA official told him the lack of physical evidence would make it difficult to investigate. When he replied that he had buried the animals himself and knew their location, the official then told him that because the deaths had taken place during the hiatus [in filming], the AHA had no jurisdiction."

HSUS' Paul Shapiro discusses alliances with labor

Paul Shapiro is the vice president of farm animal protection at the Humane Society of the United States. He agreed to an interview with me in which he discussed alliances with the workers' movement, among other things.

Jon Hochschartner: You recently coauthored a piece with the vice president of the United Farm Workers. How can the animal movement develop a better relationship with the labor movement, so we might work together on issues we agree on?

Paul Shapiro: Factory farms are terrible places to be a farm animal, and they're also bad places to be a farm worker. There's a reason turnover is so high at these facilities. Not only is it physically draining to work inside animal factories, but the mental toll which comes from being around such violence all day long is also quite serious. One need only peruse Human Rights Watch's report on the working conditions for slaughter workers, for example, to know that these are very dangerous jobs.

So there should be a good amount of common ground between those seeking to help farm animals and those seeking to help farm workers. That's one reason The Humane Society of the United States regularly works with the United Farm Workers on joint efforts. We've also partnered with other workers' rights organizations to

challenge a particularly inhumane poultry slaughter method that also causes traumatic injury to workers.

These are just a couple examples, but certainly there are more.

JH: For you, how, if at all, are the campaigns against worker and animal exploitation linked?

PS: They're linked in many ways. For example, many dairy farm workers don't want to perpetrate cruelties against cows, but are forced to do so to remain in their jobs. They sometimes have to cut the cows' tails off, and without any pain relief for the animals. This practice causes substantial animal suffering, and yet many dairy workers still are compelled by management to do it, despite the fact that they don't want to.

In other cases, workers who are treated poorly may sometimes in turn take out their frustrations on animals, leading to a cycle of violence. And yet in other cases, such as in conventional poultry slaughter, the very method of slaughter which is so terrible for the birds also increases the risk of injury to workers compared to other methods which cause less animal suffering.

JH: How do you respond to those animalists who argue the species politics of the Humane Society are too conservative?

PS: There's a reason the meat industry routinely attacks HSUS above any other organization in the animal movement. The editor of Pork Magazine, for example, says, "HSUS won't go away; in fact it has gained strength. It has the formula down and will replicate its strategies within the pork sector as well as across the agriculture sector." And the editor of Egg Industry magazine seems to agree, writing in 2013 that "The Humane Society of the United States is a formidable adversary for all of animal agriculture."

JH: Does the Humane Society have any sort of democratic mechanisms so that those animalists who are dissatisfied with the organization might help steer it in a more agreeable direction? If so, can you describe these mechanisms?

PS: HSUS policies are largely determined by our board of directors, and board members are elected by a vote of the HSUS membership.